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UNKNOWN WARWICKSHIRE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE STORY *of* COVENTRY

CHESTERTON

UNKNOWN WARWICKSHIRE

By MARY DORMER HARRIS
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In Memoriam Matris

PREFACE

THERE must be many places in Warwickshire which readers will miss and blame me for not writing of in these pages. But what will you have? A selection there must be; the world could scarcely contain all that might be written of the patient homeliness of these Warwickshire villages, their unending history, and the wavelike country with its growth of trees and the quiet hills. For various reasons I have chosen to speak of the stone villages of the south, which can be reached from Kineton or Brailes, and of those of the south-east, which can be reached from Harbury or Fenny Compton. Leamington is such a good centre for the Avon Valley, that it seemed well to include villages that can be reached from that pleasant place even in a walk on a winter's day. While some of the George Eliot country in the north—to be reached from Coventry or by motor—imperatively called for inclusion.

In writing I have borne in mind the walker, for he undoubtedly sees the country best, but since these are hurrying days, and they who travel by motor take the shortest way between two points, no matter what route they choose, I have thought of them in speaking of the lanes between Barford and Brailes, and the devious route from Southam and Napton by Prior's Hardwick to Wormleighton.

To justify the title of this book I have sought to lay stress on remote or rarely visited places like Idlicote, Halford and Fillongley, and to treat of the less familiar aspects of places that are already familiar to all.

There is a harvest of history waiting to be gathered all over this country side, and I have only been able to pluck an ear or two of that harvest. Some day I should like, either to stray in other fields of this noted shire, or to return to those I have already visited, and glean a fuller sheaf.

This book is "no furniture for the scholar's library," but must only serve as a pastime for those, who have travelled, or desire to travel, over the ways of the county, which some of us are lucky enough to call our home. Mistakes there are doubtless here in plenty for I have treated often perforce of subjects of which I have very little knowledge, and in technicalities have leant heavily on others' aid. If this writing of mine cause any to desire to see unseen fair places, or bring others back to look again on them with love, all will be well.

I am indebted for valuable help, particularly in connection with the tombs at Warwick, Chesterton, Aston, Birmingham and Astley, as well as in sundry architectural points, to Mr. Philip B. Chatwin, who kindly allowed me to read in proof his paper on the "Monumental Effigies of the County of Warwick" to be included in Vol. XLVII (1921) of the Transactions of the Birmingham Archæological Society. Mr. F. W. Wellstood kindly gave me information about the Bidford excavation discoveries. Mr. H. M. Jenkins showed me his "Note" in N. and Q. on the subject of "Idlicote and Thomas Cawarden," and supplied me

with information about Warwickshire families at Halford, Cubbington, and other places, information of which I have made (I fear) somewhat unsparing use. The same applies to the valuable notes on Halford, of which the loan was made to me by the relatives of the late F. Scarlett Potter, and what a delightful and industrious writer he was may be seen from the selections in the chapters relating to that village. I hope that the whole of Mr. Potter's MS. may some day appear in print.

I have also to acknowledge the aid and courtesy of the Rev. J. R. Taft, D.D., Mr. J. A. Hill, Mr. Owen and Miss Mills. Moreover I am more especially bound to remember a kind friend, owner of an Overland motor, without whose aid I could never have explored certain out-of-the-way corners, and a kinsman who enlightened my ignorance by his sound knowledge of sport. Errors should be ascribed, however, to me.

MARY DORMER HARRIS.

Leamington, May, 1924.

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UNKNOWN WARWICKSHIRE

B

Idlicote on the Hill, Whatcote Downderry,
Beggarly Oxshill and lousey Fulready,
Yawning Yettington, peeping Pillarton
and one-eyed Marston.

(Jingle current on the Oxfordshire Border).

CHAPTER I

Harvest Country in the Vale of the Red Horse —Butler's Marston

THE villages of the Vale of the Red Horse such as the Pillertons, Oxhill, Tysoe can be reached by the little frequented road through Kineton and the pleasant uphill and downdaleness of Butler's Marston, a place of unimaginable charm.

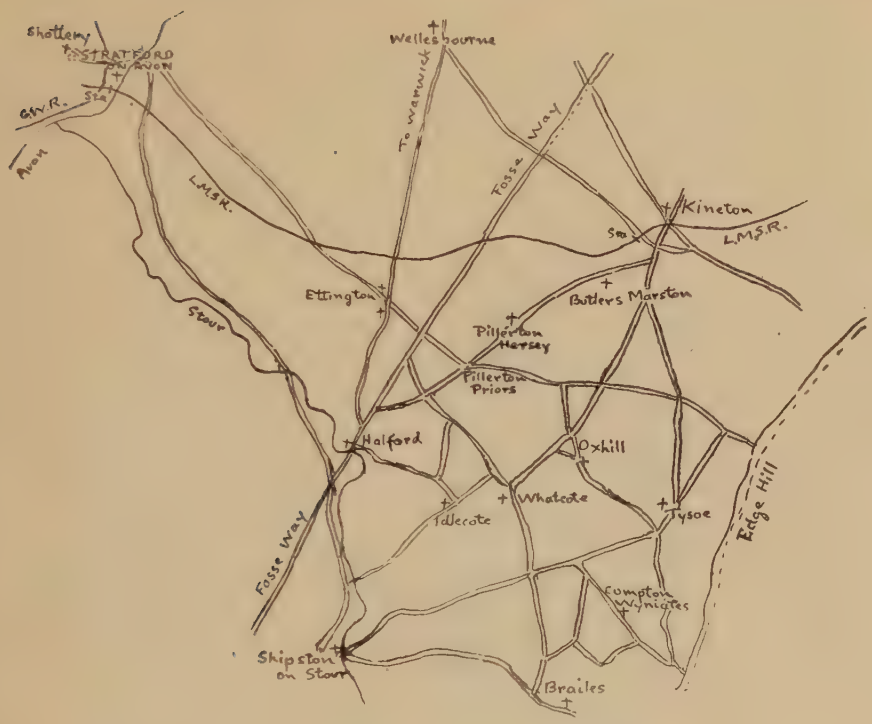
There is little to describe here in Marston, just a valley, a stream, a few trees, stone causeways and cottages with roofs of thatch. The church is in nowise remarkable save for a few Norman arches to confirm its age, a classically draped memorial to a departed Woodward, and its moving quietness—"silence more beautiful than any song." Yet here is perfect England. Above the church is a place for lingering, and for my part I hold it good to sit long in a green field on a golden August day. Care drops away, and the trouble of the heart is stilled. There is yet some joy to be drunk from the cup of life. "Yea," saith the Preacher, "a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun."

They tell me hard by Marston is an old barrow and at Tub's End, where the old road from Kineton went, a packhorse bridge. History stretches everlastingly back. Men and the old ways pass. The very names about here, like Lobbington, suggest the tales of long ago. Scholars may derive Lobbington how they please—and names are in very sooth will o' the wisps to lead the unwary astray—but for me the farm overlooking Combrook is the veritable home of 'Lob-

lie-by-the-fire,' Milton's "lubbar fiend" and "drudging goblin," who does his task, rests on the hearth and "ere the first cock his matin rings" is gone.

The known history of Marston is scant but it touches lightly on remembered events and well-known men. It is called after the Botelers, its chief owners in the Middle Ages, the usual time for the bestowal of permanent names. For a short time a Cromwell held it, not the Oliver, whose greatness touches even rustic imaginations, since they still attribute all happenings to his action and date all events from his day, but his kinsman Thomas, also a mighty figure in English history, *malleus monachorum*, the hammer of the monks. That Cromwell ever tarried here is unlikely, being busied in the destruction of an ancient order and pleasuring in Henry VIII an exacting lord. His day passed and with the "boot and saddle" times of the Civil Wars we find the Woodwards at Butler's Marston, equipped and eager to fight. What a gathering in of men there was then over the Butler's Marston countryside! What a polishing of helmets, rubbing of harness, and grooming of horses from dawn to dusk in the early autumn days of the year of grace sixteen hundred and forty-two! How the tankards banged on oaken tables, and the women servants hurried back and forth to the pantry, bearing pewter dishes and cheeses and well-stuffed chine, while in the wainscotted parlour, pricking their fingers over scarves and collars, old women and maidens kept back their tears.

So the last toast was drunk and the men clattered away. Richard Woodward raised at his own cost a troop of horse, and died, with his brother, on Sunday, October 23rd, 1642, on Edge Hill field. I wonder how the news came on that chill



autumn night that both the Woodwards were dead. It is strange (are people careless or forgetful ?) that the memorial in the church, raised to this Cavalier Captain, has disappeared and gone.*

The fight at Edge Hill must have strangely moved the countryside that for nearly two hundred years had known peace. On the next Christmas Eve ghostly warriors rose and fought together on the field where they had died, as appears

* On the authority of Miller " Parishes of Warwickshire."

by an account both true and imprinted, signed by a minister of religion and a justice of the peace. Tales of the battle abound. A lane in Tysoe (says Mr. Miller) where the royalist troops unsaddled is called Saddling Lane. The story goes that Captain Henry Kingsmill, whose effigy, bewigged after the Restoration fashion, lies in Radway Church, rode a white horse in the field, thus presenting an easy target to a gunner on the Parliament side. "By what they tell me," said a local acquaintance, discussing the preliminaries of the fight, "one army stood below in the valley anigh Radway, where there was an old village as is done away with now and t'other on the top of the hill where there's a battle-axe sort of place." Though the reference to the long vanished village of Westcote and to Saunderson Miller's sham battlemented Round Tower is but vague, my Edge Hill friend gave quite a correct description of the disposition of the rival armies, until Charles moved down from a well-chosen ground to give battle in the plain below.

It is not known how many died that day. Perhaps Thomas May puts the number too high when he records that he had "heard that the country people thereabouts, by burying of the naked bodies, found the number to be about six thousand that fell on both sides, besides those that died afterwards of their wounds." Others put the losses at a few hundreds on each side. Most of the dead were buried in the field, but some, probably borne thence wounded, were laid in the village churchyards near. One lies at Newbold Pacey, and there lie at Warmington two captains (named) and seven men unknown.

About Marston Butler it is cold land that sheep cannot

BUTLER'S MARSTON

be folded on in winter, stiff clay, that takes as many as four horses to draw the plough. On this soil red wheat, such as Shakespeare's Justice Shallow bade sow on the headland, gives a better yield than white wheat, though white commands by a shilling a quarter the higher price. The Warwickshire Feldon, south of the Avon, is always said by old writers to be "plentiful of corn." And it is good to see how, under the green of Edge Hill, the fields in August lie glorious with uncut wheat, white gold and red-gold, and silvery unripened barley. The oats stand already in shocks, while near by the long team passes up the furrow and the earth turns up dark under the plough. But alack! for these latter days. The wheat area shrinks. Grass usurps its place. There is little need of labour for ploughing and harvest. The Town and the far West beckon the labourer or the little farmer's son, and his place knows him no more. Meanwhile the thatch on the roof over the little cottage decays. Soon it stands a bare empty shell; at last it falls, a heap of stones, the dwelling that for generations sheltered the living and the dead.

There is a talk of the inevitable working of economic laws and well, well! the world is wide. Young people long to try their wings. The wind will rustle in the wheat of the Canadian harvest planted by men from North End and Fenny Compton and Butler's Marston and Oxhill and Tysoe and Whatcote. Every land has its exiles. And some forget. Now and then there will be one who remembers the ways of home and the field of the twisting stream where the violets grew, blue and white, and the wealth of golden green mistletoe on the apple-tree by the shed.

They have put up one or two stone cottages in Marston.

BUTLER'S MARSTON

This is a commendable experiment in a country where, if they do build at all, they choose (in obedience to inevitable economic law) the meaner material of brick. Sometimes too (but this is pure original sin) the builders follow the florid Gothic style of these latter days though a perfectly proportioned stone cottage may be within sight falling to decay.

There is one little fact about Butler's Marston that needs remembering. From this village came a Miss Woodward, who in 1729, married a Thackeray from Hampsthwaite in Yorkshire, and became the great-grandmother of William Makepeace Thackeray. Let it be said too that true patriots of this shire cherish the notion that all famous Englishmen inherit either from the sword or the spindle side a streak of Warwickshire blood.

CHAPTER II

Pillerton Hersey

—" Honorificabilitudinitatibus "

PILLERTON HERSEY, so-called from the de Hercy family, its ancient lords, otherwise Lower Pillerton (the signposts display a fine confusion) lies about a mile from Butler's Marston, and must at all costs be kept distinct from Pillerton Priors, or Upper Pillerton, which stands high but unremarkable on the Banbury-Stratford road.

Pillerton of the Hercies is one of those quiet places, which do good to the soul. It is a tiny village, off the frequented high road, with a population so lamentably decreased in the last sixty years of the nineteenth century that it can scarcely be larger than it was at Domesday, more than eight hundred years ago. The place must have its complexities, its tragedies, since there are but human kind, who dwell in and possess it. Nevertheless to a careless eye life passes equably here, and there is an old garden I know of, east of a little stone house, a garden " as green as any leek," where it is good to sit among the bending apple-trunks and watch the robin's delicate spring and darting head, and lament—but not curtail—the blackbird's feast among the cherry boughs.

Pillerton has scarcely achieved the picturesque. A centre is lacking. The church is almost confronted by a barn, and the manor-house, which contains some panels of flowered tent-stitch work done by Anne Hooper, later Mrs. Prowse,

daughter of Bishop Hooper, once chaplain in Holland to Queen Mary II, is nearly concealed by trees. Outside the church is

PILLERTON

everyday, within it is unique, austere, a miniature Salisbury Cathedral. There is a finely proportioned thirteenth century chancel; the Perpendicular south aisle is later. The north

aisle is modern, the nave roof is of the fifteenth century, and among details to be noted are rings on the wall above the chancel rails for the Lenten veil. This veil was hung during Lent a little before the high altar and dropped at the reading of the Passion on the Wednesday in Holy Week at the words, "And the veil of the temple was rent in twain."

But it is not these details that make Pillerton church remarkable. The secret of its beauty, its austerity, lies less in its architectural harmony, though this is remarkable, than in the vision of cool summer greenery seen through windows of uncoloured glass. The church is a marvel and could be spoiled with a breath. A little gaudy decoration, a stained glass window, and the building would be a ruin of its former state. To plant a tree in the churchyard, and put in the church beside it a window of transparent glass, that were a way to keep (for as reasonable time as need is) a man's memory green.

The registers of Pillerton, which date from 1539, enshrine by a scribe's casual scribble, the monster-word *honorificabilitudinitatibus*, thereby attaining to some small celebrity among those learned in trifles of Shakesperean lore. The word occurs in "Love's Labour's Lost," V.1, a scene full of those tiresome verbal encounters, which require such copious annotations. Costard, the country clown, says to Moth, Armado's small, precocious page,

> "I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee for a word; for thou art not so long by the head as *honorificabilitudinitatibus*: thou art easier swallowed than a flap-dragon."

There are people who imagine the use of this absurdity to be

an effort of scholarship beyond the reach of an unlettered country clown such as the Stratford poet. One of them thinking that the word contained a hitherto undiscovered cryptic message concerning the Baconian authorship evolved from its polysyllabic store the anagram : "*Hi ludi F. Baconis nati tuiti orbi :* These plays, F. Bacon's offspring, are preserved to the world." The fact that the Pillerton scribe chose this long-tailedness to try his pen upon shows the word was generally (and locally) known in Shakespeare's day.

There is a modern epitaph in the churchyard, of which the Pillerton people are immensely proud. It is clear that the subject of it played the part of undertaker to the village community. It tells how :—

> "Oft as each Christian neighbour fell,
> Studious he shaped each honest shell
> To order of the tolling bell.
> And each poor soul he gently gave
> With slackened cordage to the grave.
> Foremost in many a funeral throng
> Himself reserved in mercy long."

These lines then continue in a vein which induces the reflection that the writing of epitaphs is a lost art. The classic instances of them are brief and have a touch of the eternal, like Blackford's, which we shall read at Oxhill. Others, like brave old Philemon Holland's (Whole-land) at Coventry, are pointed with a jest or pun. Modern decorum, however, cannot suffer a jesting encounter with the King of Terrors. I have heard that the point of a worthy tallow-chandler's memorial inscription at Knowle—he possessed the unusual and delightful name of Dionysius Boston—was ruined by the

local parson's deletion of the allusion to letting "your light so shine before men," a piece of obtuseness little short of criminality. The best Warwickshire epitaph I know which plays upon a man's calling is that of the Brinklow woodcutter :

> "This man he got his livelihood
> By hewing faggots and felling wood,
> Till Death, the conqueror of all,
> Gave the feller himself a fall."

CHAPTER III

Oxhill—An Enchanted Land

HERE and there broad belts of wayside turf line the Stratford-Banbury road and within the hedges rise golden waves of corn. The Warwickshire wild pear country, all in its glory in April, lies Alcester way to the north-west, yet here between Pillerton Priors and Oxhill gate is a wild pear I would fain see abloom in spring. Is it a foolish fancy or do those tufted ashes on the hill-top resemble those of Hobbema's famed avenue of Middelharnis ? There is a gate to open ; the jingle of the reaping machine, the grasshopper's chirp hardly break the stillness, and towards the green ridge of Edge Hill the road runs white and curving through the fields past a long hayrick in the valley into an enchanted country. In the green and pleasant Midlands one can ask for no fairer sight.

Yet it is a dying land. As I looked, a countryman came and talked to me. He was a native, who had found his living in a distant town, yet he loved his native place, and would gladly have lived there had the Fates allowed, and in the summer he came back to help with the hay. We talked of many things, old and new, of Edge Hill fight, of these latter days when townsmen and women sit at ease, putting their money, not into land, but safe government investments, while country lads and lasses leave the soil and good arable " tumbles down " to grass, because mowing pays better than wheat. Oxhill, he held, was dying out. In his memory

thirty cottages, it might be, had fallen down, never to be rebuilt. Orchards were not renewed—" trees as I've robbed when I was a boy are past bearing, but they don't plant new ones "—there is no outlook for future gain.

Yet there remained the marvellous attraction of the country for the country born. We looked across the valley to the tree-grown ridge of Edge Hill ; on our right was the distant gray-white line of the Cotswold heights. " Though you have everything money can buy, there is nothing like Nature," he said. I suppose it was town life that had loosened his tongue, and at the same time made him aware of the contrast between grime and sordidness and this heavenly clearness and peace. Some countrymen betray a sour indifference to Nature. " When you've lived 'ere goin' on fur forty year," a morose labourer said to me of a romantic bit of countryside, " you don't take account of the looks on it." This is true but for the rarest type of mind. Use dulls pleasure. One must be happy and free to feel the charm of the changing lights with the passage of the hours. To a hard-worked labourer a field must represent, not a fair point in a landscape, but so much ploughing, manuring, draining, drilling, harrowing, hoeing and harvesting to be got over in wind and rain, heat and cold, for another man's gain on another man's land.

The lads and lasses are leaving the villages. Tied on the land as a serf up to the fifteenth century, bound to his parish by the Poor Laws of a later time, nothing can kill in the labourer the desire to wander, to be free, to " better himself in the world." There are ancient rolls of parchment in the Record Office at London, which tell of the life of Oxhill land-workers in the old days of serfdom in the thirteenth century

on the Abbot of Bordesley's estate. These men were tied to the soil. Their gains were not their own, as we understand possession, and by a thousand restrictions they were made to feel that they came of unfree blood. Yet these men and women had dreams beyond the village. In 1277 a certain serf paid half a mark (6s. 8d.) for leave to "crown" his son (make a priest of him by the tonsure), while Juliana le Kembestar paid the same sum to her lord for leave to marry and go whither she would.

So thinking on many things I strolled down the hill, and the gray thatch and stone of Oxhill barns and cottages came into view among the trees, all beautiful with a quiet beauty that contents the heart. In the village itself the charm holds yet. Most of Oxhill is a sedate little stone street, with a diminutive inn, called—as in Tysoe hard by—the "Peacock," and there is a marvellous timber gabled house down a left-hand bye-lane.

The dark grey church with its embattled tower stands at the extreme south of the village towards the lines of the glorious hills. It is nearly surrounded by larch trees, which make a pleasant murmur when the wind is busy with their branches—the most beautiful of sounds. The church looks dignified and enduring, with the air undisturbed ancient country churches have of bearing witness to "laws which wax not old." I know not why there is magic in the place and why I felt at heart's ease there. Maybe I had lived with those I loved and been happy in Oxhill in a former life.

Outside and inside the church are good Norman details, particularly at the south door, where are zigzag mouldings, rosettes, and above, a row of heads. In the west end are fine

bench ends and a chancel screen cut down to fit the tower arch. In the chancel on the north side is a low side-window, and concerning the origin and purpose of low side-windows it is meat and drink to archæologists to dispute. One who knows tells me that no one explanation will fit every example, but that in many cases the sanctus bell was rung through the opening so that those outside might know of the elevation of the Host.

OXHILL

The chief glory of the church, however, is the font, not long since restored to its place, having been used as a water trough and a flower vase! It is curiously carved with inter-

laced arches filled with patterns representing flowers, but the three western compartments tell the tale

> "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe."

The nude, attenuated figures of Adam and Eve appear on either side of the serpent twined round the tree, its head inclined towards the Mother of mankind, whose long arms are crossed over her thread-like form. The Fall is a favourite subject for fonts, representing as it does the beginning of the inheritance of sin to be washed away in the waters of baptism.

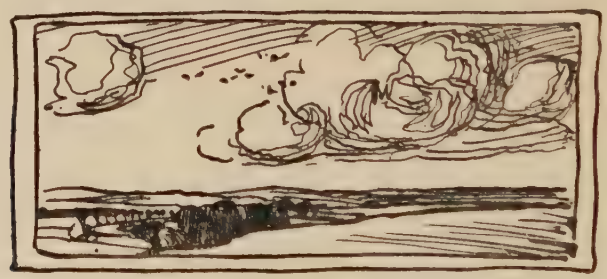
In the nave is the famous epitaph to a member of a family still living in Oxhill.

> "Hick jacet corpus de Daniely Blackford quy morte Octobris vicessima quinto An dom 1680 aetatis sue 59. When I was younge I ventered life and blood boath for my kinge and for my countreys good, in elder yeares my care was chiefe to bee souldiers for him that shed his blood for mee."

I went once more to Oxhill to see the parish-clerk and examine the church-books. The evening was drawing on and I could not stay to gather much of parish history, save some items of the heavy expenses of the Napoleonic era, a time like ours when Revolution was a bugbear and the labourers were placated by supplementary wages drawn from the rates. There was war waged on adders (eather), woodpeckers (hickels, ickels) which were paid for when captured at 2d. a head. The clerk told me of a strange funeral of his early days, when owing to fear of infection, the villagers had refused to touch the bodies of a man who had died from erysipelas and of the woman, who nursed him, stricken

with the same disease. The doctor and clergyman did the last offices for the dead, and an old razor-grinder drove a cart with the woman's coffin in it to the grave.

I was weary and sat to rest on the little bridge-side while the green fields took on a deeper hue in response to the sunset red. Gradually the flush faded from the hills. Lovers came back from a village fete and crossed the bridge, the lads rather peaked and awkward, the lasses rounder and gayer in their brightly coloured clothes. My friend of the previous day came down again for a little and discussed the eternal theme of the emptying country-side. "England is lost unless we get the land back under cultivation," said the pessimist. But how? We had come to an *impasse*. "At any rate we shall not mend it by talking," we said. Then I rose and went home across the twilight fields.



HARVEST SCENE IN OXHILL

CHAPTER IV

Tysoe and the Martial Horse

FROM Oxhill a tree-shaded lane leads into Church Tysoe, a dark stone village where quaint cottage windows look out under eyebrows of thatch. At the smithy a horse stood waiting to be shod, for all the world like a Morland picture, only the horse was not white. There seemed to be an everlasting murmur of talk at the well where women stood, as in "Faust" in poor Gretchen's day. The church of the Assumption stands up tall and dark with a fine pierced parapet and a sanctus bell-cote; the latter is, however, not very old. The south door is Norman and above it there is a little panel with the Agnus Dei. In spite of rather drastic restoration, or—in the case of the chancel—probably rebuilding, the church is impressive. In the south wall, as at Corley, the original and very ancient windows of the outer wall were left when the aisle was added, and the wall itself pierced to admit of the building of a Norman arcade. In the north aisle under an arch in the wall is a very curious effigy where the head and feet only appear. The brasses have distinct merit: the earliest commemorates an ecclesiastic, Thomas Mastropp, who died on 29th November, 1465, while another shows a woman in Elizabethan dress. The glory of the church however, is the Decorated font, one of the best of which the county can boast. It is octagonal, and each of the eight sides is adorned with the figure of a saint: one, St. Mary Magdalene with a pot of ointment; two, St. Michael with a balance; three, the Virgin

and Child ; four, the Baptism of Christ (the water is delightfully rendered) ; five, St. Catherine with the wheel ; six, St. Peter with the keys ; seven, Christ as judge ; eight, St. Paul with the sword.

The poet Jago in "Edge Hill," an eighteenth century work on Warwickshire in Miltonic blank verse, speaks of "Tysoe's wondrous theme, the Martial Horse." For in the old days in Tysoe a large figure of a red horse, which gave its name to the country round, appeared cut in the earth in a meadow hard by the church. The horse was kept clear of the encroaching grass by an annual scouring such as took place in Berkshire. Undoubtedly of ancient origin, this figure, like the corresponding White Horse in the vale of that name, probably commemorated some event in the Saxon tide of conquest. A writer of 1700 says : "Because the Earth is red it is called the Red Horse and gives a Denomination to the fruitful Vale about it, called the Vale of the Red Horse. The Trenches about the Horse are cleansed every year by a freeholder of the Lordship who holds his Land by that service."

After the origin of the Horse was forgotten the country people connected it with the great Earl of Warwick, whose doings in battle took on a legendary colour. They said the Red Horse was cut by the Kingmaker in memory of the charger which he slew at the battle of Towton. The story of the French chronicler, Monstrelet, relates how, the issue of the fight being in doubt, Warwick slew his horse so that his men might know he would not ride from the field, and swore upon the cross of his sword to conquer or die. "The greatest press of the battle," says one account, "lay in the quarter where the Earl of Warwick stood." Another describes him as "pressing on

like a second Hector," encouraging the young soldiers. Until this last Great War diminished by comparison all former death-rolls in battle, Towton was considered as the most deadly battle in English history. "There was more red than white visible on the snow," says one writer, and "the dead hindered the living from coming to close quarters," they lay so thick. Maybe there was a scouring of the Red Horse in connection with the Yorkist victory.

It is doubtful if Warwick were ever present at the village festival, but some of his retainers from his Brailes estate may have fought at Towton by his side. The Red Horse by the "Sunrising" is a comparatively modern work, cut to attract custom to the sometime hostelry. The ancient figure at Tysoe did not, alas! survive the Enclosure of the common fields, 1798.

Tysoe has become a classic place for those who study Poor Law history at the latter part of the eighteenth century. Mr. A. W. Ashby, a native of the village, has examined the parish accounts to good purpose, and the result embodied in the "Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History" is well known. There are very informing instances in the book of the incessant litigation which went on between village and village concerning the "settlement" of some unhappy pauper. Frequently in attempting to escape their liabilities the Poor Law authorities wasted in the law-courts sufficient money to have provided for the pauper in comfort all his days. There is an expense sheet in this volume showing how in 1780 and 1781, Tysoe paid £22 or thereabouts mainly in food and drink in order to return J. Bister to Harbury, the place of his alleged settlement, while Harbury, also anxious to shirk its

responsibilities, would be equally lavish. In the contest Tysoe came out as victor, even, according to the adage, "killing two birds with one stone," since the authorities not only returned J. Bister but saddled Harbury with his newly married (probably pauper) wife. This carting of poor folk, dependent on the rates, from one place to another must have been fraught with great hardships in the case of the sick, the very young and the very old.

It is remarkable that at the end of the eighteenth century Tysoe managed a bakery, a parish malt-house, and traded in coal. Under the Enclosure Award an allotment of eighteen acres was made for the poor in compensation for the loss of fuel rights, and the income derived from this allotment was used by the overseer for the purchase of coals. It is little to the credit of the overseers however, that coal was priced by them at 4/- a hundredweight instead of its proper value of 1/8 a hundredweight, so that the poor cottagers received the value, not of 18 acres, but of 7 acres, in compensation for the loss of their rights on the common.

These are unpleasant memories. In happier contrast we may note that the present day authorities are building new cottages in Tysoe, and of stone.

TYSOE

CHAPTER V

Idlicote and Whatcote

—Out of the World

IDLICOTE, which is reached from Halford by sequestered lanes overlooking for some distance the winding Stour and its willows, has a pond, a green, a tiny row of stone cottages, a miniature church within the manor grounds, almost filled by a three-decker and a squire's pew, and a view to the south—ah! ye gods! what a view!—of the pale Cotswold Hills.

I have never seen a village in these parts so daintily perfect, so out of the world. It is a little gem of the eighteenth century and were it not that the children seemed peaked and thin, I would gladly put a glass case over the entire village—and the case need not be so very large—and keep it thus for posterity.

There is a right-of-way to the church through the trim grounds of Idlicote House, where there are well-clipt hedges, and a curious tower of brick and stone, much renovated as to its upper storeys, with a sham-looking opening for a cross-bow. I have heard that the lower storey of this tower was once part of a beacon-house such as is found at Burton Dassett; at any rate the walls here are thick and old. An aged gardener being consulted as to the antiquity of the tower said he had been informed that it dated from the time of the Wars of the Roses, adding with rustic caution, "but how they knows on it as told me, I dunno!"

Idlicote House stands back among trees with a low wall in front ornamented with urns. Never have I seen urns appear to such advantage as these; they were filled with bright pink geranium and might have been placed there by Lady Luxborough, a Warwickshire worthy, who corresponded with Mr. Shenstone, and gave much thought to the classic decoration of her garden. The house is an old one, altered in 1863, and recently under the plaster of one of the rooms there was discovered a fine carved mantelpiece.

The manor has had an eventful history. It belonged to the ever-recurring Kenilworth canons, who are said to have had a cell here, and after the Dissolution Henry VIII granted it to Thomas Cawarden, his Master of the Revels. Those were days when enormous sums were wasted in pastimes. The dress of Edward VI's Court Fool cost £26, and that of the Lord of Misrule nearly double the sum—a fortune, considering the worth of money in those days. No wonder Tudor kings were forced to debase the coinage to ease the payment of their debts. Cawarden kept his theatrical properties at the old monastery of Blackfriars, a locality famous for its theatre in Shakespeare's day. He died in 1559, having prepared the pageantry for the coronation of Elizabeth. It is not known if he visited Idlicote, but the possible presence of such a master of stage-craft in the Shakespeare country a few years before the poet's birth is a matter which contains food for thought.*

Elizabeth granted Idlicote to Ludovic Greville, who in 1567 sold it to William Underhill. If, as Miller says in his

* See H. M. Jenkins on "Cawarden and Idlicote." N. & Q. vol. 146, No. 31, p. 79.

WARWICKSHIRE GRANDMOTHER

"Parishes of Warwickshire," the Virgin Queen herself paid a visit to Idlicote, it was probably on August 24th, 1572, on her way from Charlecote to Compton Wynyates in the time of this William Underhill's son, called also William. He was then a minor, and ward of Sir Christopher Hatton, the favourite of Elizabeth. There is a tragedy hanging over this special progress of Elizabeth, for when she reached Woodstock, tidings were brought to her of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Tragedies, too, hang over the two Elizabethan owners of Idlicote. Ludovic Greville, of Milcote, was descended from the family whose home was at Drayton in Oxfordshire. They grew rich through prudent marriages, and in the reign of Henry VIII, Sir Edward Greville, who had the wardship of Elizabeth Willoughby, heiress of the Beauchamps of Powyk, tried to induce her to marry his eldest son, John. Her answer was that she liked better Fulk, the second brother. The father, urging the claims of the eldest, said that Fulk had no estate to maintain her, that he was on the king's service of war beyond the seas, and his return was doubtful. The heiress answered that she had sufficient for both: that she would pray for his safety, and wait for his return. It was a fortunate choice. She carried a great fortune to the younger branch of the Grevilles, who eventually became Earls of Warwick, while the Milcote branch, beginning with the rejected John, showed a terrible criminal taint, which brought grief and disgrace on all their kin. John seems to have escaped the full reward of his misdeeds. Not so Ludovic, owner of Idlicote, his grandson. He had a quarrel with Sir John Conway and would have killed him in the streets of London but for the intervention of servants. A fatal accident to his

own child was but an occasion for jest. At length he plotted a murder, which was his undoing. Coveting the inheritance of a servant named Web, he contrived to kill him, and caused a confederate to personate the dead man as one sick in bed for the purpose of dictating to an unsuspecting minister a will in Greville's favour. After another murder to hush a talebearer, the crime was discovered. Greville was brought to trial in 1589, but refusing to plead was pressed to death. By this fortitude at least he saved himself from being branded as a felon and prevented the confiscation of his estates, thus preserving his children's inheritance.

Another tragedy clings to the next possessors of the Idlicote estate. William Underhill, a lawyer, son of Edward Underhill of Ettington, bought the place from Greville in 1567. He seems to have lived near Stratford, and was very helpful to poor Clopton tenants, when oppressed by one Bott, an unscrupulous agent of the owner of Clopton. "No poor man," it was said, "might dwell by Bott if Mr. Underhill did not assist him." In the same year that he purchased Idlicote, Underhill also bought a messuage, New Place, in Stratford, which his son, another William, sold to Shakespeare in 1597. This same year the second William Underhill died at Fillongley, poisoned, it appears, by his eldest son, Fulk, who was under age. The facts of the poisoning do not seem to have leaked out until five years later, after Fulk's own death. The Underhill estate descended to Fulk's brother, Hercules, whom we meet at Halford.* The lord of the manor is now the Earl of Southampton.

* Stopes "Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries," pp. 161-4, 228-34.

The diminutive church has been well kept, and if somewhat overpainted and grained just now, it has escaped the Gothic revival of the last century. It must contain, surely, the only three-decker left in the shire, a most interesting survival, which everywhere else parsons and architects seem to have leagued together to suppress. A large family pew, well-upholstered in dark blue, is of the dimensions of a small room, and there is a peep hole, through a pillar, perhaps for the squire to see the tenantry and villagers come in at the door. The church is a queer medley of the very ancient, and the relatively modern; there is a Norman doorway, a modern classic screen, a little classic arcade between the chancel and an aisle or chapel, where are memorials to the Legges and Peaches, formerly owners of the manor. The happiest feature of Idlicote is the view southwards to the glorious hills.

There were twenty-nine heads of families in Idlicote at Domesday in 1086, that is, a population of 120 to 150 souls. There were 75 persons here in 1901.

The gravity of the failure of latter-day English policy as it affects village life is writ large in the lovely deserted stone villages under the shadow of the hills.

A little further on, deeper into the lanes, lies Whatcote with a church built like Ladbrook tower in the Southam country of ashlar of two courses. The north door has good Norman mouldings with a little human figure on one of the capitals, and there is some fine tracery in the east window. The interior, in spite of some details of interest, such as the carved oak benches, is bare and disappointing, though the church is distinguished by memorials to departed rectors. There is an incised slab with cross and chalice to the memory

of Thomas Nelle, who died in 1485, and a (headless) brass showing a man in priest's robes with the inscription "Pray for the sowl of Sr Wyllm Auldyngton some tyme parson here on whos sowle Jhu (Jesu) have myrcy." He died 1511. Another incised slab commemorates John Davenport, rector here for seventy years and six months, who died July 20, 1668, aged 104, and his wife, "uxor amantissima," who died 1656, aged 88. This length of tenure of a rectory surely furnishes a record. What a long life the pair had together in the quiet little village in the shadow of the hills. Davenport must have been born in the same year as Shakespeare, and died a year after the publication of "Paradise Lost." He came into his cure when Essex was still the most brilliant figure at Elizabeth's court, and he died two years after the Fire of London. I wonder whether he was of the Davenports of Coventry, originally from Cheshire, among whom was the John Davenport who, with Theophilus Eaton founded the colony of Newhaven. The rectory is now joined to the living of Oxhill.

The manor has passed through many hands. Its early masters came from the family of Le Lou (Wolf), and the first two rectors, whose names have been preserved, were people from that stock. Later the estate passed into the possession of the powerful Staffords, sometime Dukes of Buckingham, who held Maxstoke Castle. Nearly all the Staffords lost their lives either in war or on the block. Edmund, Earl of Stafford, was killed at Shrewsbury, 1403, and Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, at the Battle of Northampton, 1460, while their descendants felt the might and anger of Richard III, and of Henry VIII. The last dukes are familiar figures to readers of Shakespeare's plays.

A family named Marshall must have lived a long time in the village. In 1658 George Marshall of Whatcote was brought before the justices at Warwick "for appointing Thomas Smalle, his servant, to shoot with his gun at Pigeons on the Lord's Day." Those were the times of Sabbatarianism run mad. In White's Directory of 1874 all the farmers of Whatcote bear the name of Marshall.

Every artist would be glad of the beauty of the great thatched stone barns and the few charming little cottages that make Whatcote, and every social reformer would look on it with a heavy heart. Holes in the thatched roofs gape and show the rafters, or are imperfectly mended with corrugated iron. This is a dying land.

CHAPTER VI

Halford and the Valley of the Stour

Halford I.

HALFORD is a picturesque little place with limestone and timbered houses, standing overlooking Worcestershire above the slope that goes down to the willow-fringed Stour. You might almost miss it, so few houses—save the coaching-inn and the club-house—front the Fosse Road. It is the only village hereabouts close to a Roman way and to a bridge of respectable antiquity, yet it stands apart from road and bridge, its streets converging towards a sunken way, which leads to a disused ford further down the stream. It must have been this ford that gave its name to the village, and since it was a passage of no small importance, a fort or castle, of which traces remain, guarded it. When or by whom this fort was built, none can say. It forms one of the many mysteries of this mysterious place.

The church has a striking tower, but is not so picturesque as other churches hereabouts. The graves are covered in the summer with wild pink convolvulus, waywind, as we call it, lap-love, as they say in Staffordshire, "withywind," as it is called by a fourteenth century poet. One of the large tombs commemorates William Harrison, "professor of physic," who died in 1790. He was a herbalist or "white witch" (says Mr. Scarlett Potter), and those who assisted him thought his knowledge more than mortal. One of his pupils, Molly

Nash, was bidden by him to cull a certain herb *at a certain hour* in Armscott Field. She delayed on her errand for a gossip, and gathered the herbs when the hour was past, a fact her master instantly divined when she brought them back. Throwing them out of the window he declared that all their virtue was gone !

Halford church is almost modern looking, for it has lost its beauty of surface and the atmosphere these village churches so often possess in successive restorations. The chancel has been rebuilt, the tower re-cased. Nevertheless it has many points of interest. Campanologists value the Halford treble with its unique use of a Greek work in the inscription above all bells in the shire. It is dedicated to St. John the Baptist and dates from about 1320. The sanctus bell, also mediæval, has had a chequered career. Some years after a restoration it was purchased at a sale in Leamington for 8/6, and has been rehung as a parishioner's gift. One of the bishops spoke of the carving on the Norman tympanum—the space between the arch and lintel—of the north door of the church as the most interesting piece of sculpture in his diocese. It is but rudely carved and shows an angel holding a scroll, with the legend—if any existed—long rubbed out. In Warwickshire carved tympana are far rarer and less interesting than those of the neighbouring shire of Gloucester, though there is a very good example with a swirl of evil-looking monsters over the north door at Stoneleigh. The Halford angel—can it be St. Gabriel of the Annunciation since the church is dedicated to the Virgin ?—is figured in Mr. Keyser's work on " Norman Tympana."

Though the chancel is new, the Norman chancel arch has

HALFORD BRIDGE

been left, and the cross-shaped squint is another feature that brings joy to the expert's heart. A curious chair near the altar has been made up of a misericord of the fifteenth century and a back of Jacobean carving. There seems to be no record how it came to this place.

Among benefactions to the church and parish one is recorded in 1673 of a "green velvet cushion, to the use of the church and pulpett in Halford; there to continue to the end of the world, if it so long last." I should doubt if this venerable relic survived the restoration of 1861.

Among the fourteenth century parsons of Halford may be noted John Botoner, no doubt one of the merchant family of Coventry who helped to build St. Michael's—now the cathedral. The Rev. George Grainger, who held the living after the Restoration, was something of a poet. He wrote lines which were probably intended for an epitaph upon himself. His wife Frances died in 1673, and he commemorated her in the registers in Latin verses, which he subsequently translated.

She was a modest Virgin and a wife
Chaste to her husband in the married life.
A mirrour of her sex, a mother deare;
Mild to good children, to the bad severe.
A decent matron in her garb, her dress
Neither fantastique nor yet fashionless.
Her carriage sober, of a holy mind
And open hand, her speech to all was kind.
Her fame deserves in marble to remain,
Borne of a generous stocke, and borne again.

The registers which date from 1545 also contain other naive entries. The wife of the parish clerk died of old age, but in the case of another villager a similar complaint was

brought on, it is severely added, prematurely by habitual tippling. In 1620 " a stranger and a strageler " was buried that was " murthered " in Down's Meadow in the night. In 1695 a poor creature was buried in the Fosse Way as a " felo de se," the usual place for the burial of a suicide being at four cross-roads. I suppose the holy symbol was thought to lay the unquiet ghost.

There is no great house or great family at Halford, though the mysterious family of Halford appear here as early as the reign of Henry III in the thirteenth century ; it would seem they have long left the place. The Underhills, who are found nearly everywhere in Warwickshire, at one time lived in the old Tudor house of stone and timber in the village. Of the eighteenth century squire, Mr. Aylworth, we shall speak more at large in the history of the bowling green.

One or two features of Halford history badly need further elucidation. Dugdale tells how in the reign of Edward I, one, John de Breggewrithe (? Bridge-wright) held from one of the Halfords three acres of land " for the service of finding for thirty-six poor people on every Christmas day, a loaf of bread each, a herring, and a flagon of beer." It would be interesting to trace the origin of his charity.

There is a yet more interesting piece of information recorded by Mr. Scarlett Potter from the lips of old people of the place. It has almost the air of a folk-tale, and probably enshrines the relic of a manorial custom of early date. The village had (they said) certain rights in Newbold meadow in Worcestershire, and the villagers might take thence as much hay as could be cut within a given time by a given number of men. When the hay was brought to Halford by way of the

Old Ford, there was great rejoicing. The horses which drew the waggons were decorated with ribbons, and so were the hats of the ploughboys, who drove them through the stream. How old this custom was none could tell; nor when its observance ceased.

CHAPTER VII

Halford

—Honest Hearts and Good Bowlers

THE bridge spans the stream at the passage of the Fosse. It has pointed arches and is probably as old as the fourteenth century. Though the Stour like the Till "rins sla'" it can "droon" its men, and indeed on November 27, 1896, it drowned and hid for weeks in its waters a young cyclist who apparently lost control of his machine on the steep descent, so that it struck the bridge with such force that cycle and rider bounded over the parapet into the waters beneath. Another tragedy fell out in 1840—says the church register—when John Watkins, "a simple man and a carpenter" was drowned in the Stour, while cutting bulrushes, clearly for use in the local handicraft, for the making of flag baskets, hassocks and the like from plaited rushes was formerly a prosperous industry here. I think there may be some specimens of Halford rush-plaiting on the benches of the little Friends' Meeting-house at Ettington.

The bridge was the scene—March 1645—of a skirmish in the Civil Wars. Sir Charles of the martial Comptons of Compton Wynyates, on his way from Banbury to Stratford with two troops of horse, fell in with some Roundhead cavalry escorting some 80 pack-horses down the Fosse from Gloucester to Warwick. Though ostensibly merely laden with West of England cloth at 20/- the yard, the horses bore concealed in

their packs plate, moneys and rich apparel, the wealth of the western rebels. After what appears to have been a close fight at the narrow passage of the bridge, the Royalists could account for twelve of the Parliamentarian escort killed and seventy prisoners taken, including the commander of the band. Of the pack-horses with their precious freight some six or seven passed safely over the bridge, the rest the victors captured. Only one trooper was wounded on the Royalist side.

As Halford was on the old road between Stratford and London, which kept the right bank of the Stour—says Mr. Potter in his invaluable local notes—past the villages of Willington, Barcheston, Honington, Halford and Nether Ettington, thereby avoiding two passages of the river, it must have partaken of the life and movement of a thoroughfare place. Shakespeare belike went past it on his way to a London paved with gold. In 1640 soldiers marched by this way to join the king's army against the turbulent Scots. The troops shared in the unpopularity of their master, Charles I and his adviser, Archbishop Laud. There was stone-throwing and one of the villagers died from a missile flung from a soldier's hand. Later when adequate bridges were built London traffic mostly passed through Shipston taking the far side of the river bank.

But Bath to Leamington traffic, the Nottingham coach, still went by the bridge and the "Bell," which inn a certain host, Mr. Cox, converted into a posting-house of note. This ample hostelry has an air of the spacious days when George the Third, or his son, the first Gentleman of Europe, ruled England. Nowadays motors whizz by to Worcestershire

in a trice, but when coaches and post-chaises plied from Warwick to Gloucester horns tootled and whips cracked along the Fosse; there might be a call for horses at the "Bell" and the inn-yard would be alive with ostlers', drivers' and postillions' talk of the stable and the road. Even now mile-posts beyond Warwick, ignoring (relatively) populous Wellesbourne, indicate simply the distance to Halford. Jane Austen and her mother, on the way to visit their relations at Stoneleigh, seem a little too precise and delicate for a picture of the Bell-yard, but I am inclined to think that John Thorpe of "Northanger Abbey" fame alighted there from his curricle, and swaggering about the yard boasted of the unimaginable feats of speed performed by his filly between Bath and Leamington.

The club-house opposite the "Bell," where once the neighbouring gentry foregathered is deserted, the green untended, the hedges unclipped. The golden age of Halford bowling is past. For a little over a hundred years (1783-1885) a few local gentlemen connected (incidentally) with Parliament, the magisterial bench, the higher branches of the Law, the Services, the Church, and, above all, the Land, met together at short intervals to eat their venison, drink a health to His (or Her) Majesty, to the Church, to honest hearts and good bowlers, and play a match upon the Green. It is little doubt that they were carrying on the older traditions of the place. Henry Ferrars in 1595 speaks of the "Great Bowling at Hawford and Gameing,"* and among the properties of the club were certain bowls, which had associations with a famous name.

* Mr. Scarlett Potter's Notes. I regret that I do not know the reference.

"I remember," writes Mr. Scarlett Potter, "to have been playing on the Green one day not long after the original club had ceased to exist, and when two of its former members were taking part in the game. The bowls I was using (and which I more especially affected) were marked T.L. One of these persons—a Warwickshire J.P. since gone to rest at a good old age, and whose father has long been regarded as the father of the club—told me that these same bowls had originally been owned by Shakespeare's Justice Shallow, and that the initials were those of Sir Thomas Lucy. This he gave me as having been the tradition of the club. Whether it had any foundation in fact, I cannot say, but anyway, the tradition is a good tradition and the bowls are good bowls."

A case could well be made out, it is said, for a neighbour of Sir Thomas Lucy, one Shakespeare, as "a good practical bowler," at any rate the metaphors drawn from the bowling-alley in his plays show how well his contemporaries understood the game's technique. The most famous of these occurs in the great soliloquy in "Hamlet," "Ah! there's the rub." A 'rub' was the word given to any impediment, which drives the bowl out of its course.

The original founders of Halford Club, eighteen in number, paid a guinea each and half a guinea for the support of the green. They met on Tuesdays and dined at half-past two. At first dinner took place in the "Bell," later mine host (Mr. Cox) built the club-house for the use of the members with the cellar beneath for the storage of the port on which, says Mr. Potter, the members "bestowed such loving care." "The Halford Bowling Club," he continues, "as befitted an association of influential county justices and grave divines

was essentially a body of drinkers of serious port. So inferior a beverage as claret is never once mentioned in their records, nor is there an allusion to anything so plebeian as punch, whilst the modern frivolity of champagne is unnamed during the earlier and nobler period of the club and only appears in the days of its decay."

Of serious concern, too, was the condition and dressing of the haunch of venison, a frequent present from members who owned deer parks, such as the Hon. Mrs. Leigh of Stoneleigh, first lady patroness. "There are instances," says Mr. Potter, "in the club minutes where a present of 5/- voted to the cook is a touching evidence of the heartfelt satisfaction of the eaters." But other entries there are, made in a sadder spirit, which tell of disappointed hopes, for in places we read the words "very high," "all the fat cut off," and the like. Life is, alas! full of golden dreams that fade.

Say, Muse, the names ot the "honest hearts and good bowlers," who appeared at the first club meeting upon the green. Number them, so that in the annals of bowling their prowess be not forgotten. Sixteen there were, beginning with the Hon.—Hewitt, (would that I knew his Christian name!) who must have been a son of Viscount Lifford, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, of the family of a Coventry mercer. Next comes Sir John Mordaunt, not the naval commander, hero of a court-martial, but his namesake, the baronet of Walton Hall. Next on the list, representing by his connection the Senior Service, is Sir Francis Holburne, son of Admiral Holburne, while Sir Francis's brother-in-law Mr. Ralph Sheldon, M.P. of Weston, in some sort belongs to the Junior Service, since he was at one time Colonel of the Oxfordshire Loyal Volun-

teers. Mr. Sheldon's ancestry is remembered by all who inquire about Tudor tapestry weaving at Barcheston, and the connections of Mr. Francis Canning of Foxcote, Ilmington, carry us back to those of a famous mediæval Bristol merchant. Mr. Robert Ladbrooke came from Idlicote. The eighteenth century was a great period for ornamental gardens. "Capability" Brown laid out those of Compton Verney, and Lady Luxborough of Barrels in another part of this county discussed the subjects of urns and glades and coppices in her correspondence with Mr. Shenstone. The gardens of Honington Hall, where Mr. Gore Townsend dwelt, were beautified after the design of the Radway architect, Saunderson Miller, with a grotto, statues and a cascade, relics of which—say the editors of "An Eighteenth Century Correspondence,"*—still remain. The grotto is "overgrown with trees," and "the cascade now crossed by a wooden bridge," but "the two giant recumbent stone figures still gaze down the stream." Ah! to possess a garden like this, with its memories of that charming, idle old world, which knew no troubles—save perhaps the rustic obstinacy in the matter of the Enclosure of the common fields!

Though not himself famous, Mr. Court Dewes of Wellesbourne,† next on the list, is indirectly involved with people of note. Through the Granvilles of Wellesbourne he was connected with Mrs. Delany, the aged favourite of George III, and her great-niece, Miss Marianne Port, who appears in Fanny

* Correspondence with Saunderson Miller, edited by Lilian Dickins and Mary Stanton.

(†) See "A Burney Friendship," by George Paston, 'Monthly Review,' Sept., Oct. and Nov., 1902.

Burney's "Diary" as the beautiful Miss P—. Miss Port was a frequent guest at the Windsor tea-table over which Madame Schwellenberg or Miss Burney presided and moth-like appears to have singed her wings at the dazzling radiance of one of the equerries, who is described as a 'rattle' and a man of moods. According to family tradition Colonel Goldsworthy was a serious lover, but the affair prospered ill, and Mrs. Delany's death in 1788 removed the well-nigh broken-hearted girl from the sympathetic circle of Windsor to the ungenial society of her Wellesbourne uncle and guardian, Mr. Court Dewes. I wonder if Miss Port, too engrossed in her youthful sorrows, treated the subject of bowls and bowling without the deep seriousness that the ancient pastime demands. A visit to Cheltenham, where the Court was staying, brought about no meeting with Colonel Goldsworthy, but the next winter at Bath—a place which we know from Mrs. Elton in 'Emma' offered singular matrimonial opportunities—sealed Marianne's fate. A middle-aged admirer, Mr. Waddington, possibly without having exchanged a word with the young lady who had kindled his affections, proposed to her relatives for her hand; and she, imagining herself to be a burden upon her friends and doubtful (at eighteen!) of any possibility of future happiness, resolved to accept the offer and become his wife. Mrs. Waddington, who survived her husband and died in 1850, carried on an intermittent correspondence, with just a little friction, with Miss Burney (Madame d'Arblay) for many years.

Mr. Samuel Aylworth, the next of the famous sixteen, squire of Halford, has left a fragrant memory, that still perfumes the Green and almost hallows the club-house cock-loft,

of which more anon. Had Mr. Pope lived two or three generations later he might have written of "the man of Halford" instead of the "man of Ross." It was, says Mr. Potter, Mr. Aylworth's practice to present any villager whom he valued either with the freehold of his cottage or an easy lease thereof for life. Entering unbidden the cottages before dinner time he would raise the lid of the pot on the fire and inspect its contents. If he judged the family ill-supplied with food a present of meat would arrive for the pot next day. In making his will he remembered his folk of the village. Every man or woman in his employment received £10 and every grown up labourer £5 at his death. A loveable figure, this old time squire, though modern scientific philanthropy and even common sense may opine that he was preyed on by more than the villagers, as is the lot of the generous rich. What will you have? Life is a short bleak affair at best and its path strewn with errors. To give a little comfort to the aged, a little joy to the young, brings its reward. No doubt there were many sincere mourners when in 1799 Mr. Aylworth was laid to rest in Halford churchyard.

There was also a goodly show of "grave divines" on the opening day on the green, the Rev. Dr. Kendrick, probably the Rector of Whitchurch, the Rev. J. Venour, vicar of Pillerton—the Venours were a Kineton family,—the Rev. Apperley, who must be the Antony Apperley to whom (says Miller) there is a memorial in Halford Church, and Mr. Price, Mr. Rice and Mr. Williams, men of worth, I doubt not, but so far as I can learn, without distinction. Not so the Rev. Francis Mead of Little Kineton, Fellow of Magdalen, sometime chaplain at Compton Verney. He has without doubt

earned immortality by stipulating that his cover should be laid not at the house-keeper's dining-table but rather at that of my Lord Willoughby de Broke—a landmark in the social history of the clergy of the Church of England. Enclosures, which were working a profound change in rural life, by increasing the value of the parson's glebe, helped to raise him to the social position he has ever since enjoyed.

Upstairs at the top of the club is a cock-loft, with adjustable railings made to reach the birds, if necessary, as well as to fence them in. There is no mention of cock-fighting in the annals of the club but I do not think we wrong these influential county justices if we imagine them mounting the stair to the close little room in search of a change of diversion. There they would see a " main " fought by well-trained birds armed with steel spurs washed with silver, and I imagine these diversions did not absolutely cease the very moment the law (3 & 4 Will. IV.) in 1835 made cock-fighting an illegal sport. Even I have heard in my day.....but it is as well to be discreetly silent.

A great setter-to in Warwickshire cock-combats was Owen Probyn of Shilton and Birmingham. He is described as " an asthmatic death-like man," who handled a bird with notable skill, moistening its ankles, smoothing its feathers and arousing its animosity by a sight of the foe.*

Ah! 'tis an abominable little room, this garret by the " Bell." Cruelty flourishes ever, but this particular form of it (it seems) is practised no more. One hopes that the grave divines.....but George Eliot was evidently drawing from her

* Victoria County History, Warwickshire II., p. 416.

HALFORD 'BELL' INN

reminiscences when she put into "Felix Holt" the character of the Rev. John Lingon, known in his less serious days as 'Cock-fighting Jack.' This worthy maintained "the comparative flatness of all existing sport compared with cock-fighting, under which Old England had been prosperous and glorious, while so far as he could see it had gained little by the abolition of a practice, which sharpened the faculties of men, gratified the instincts of the fowl, and carried out the design of heaven in its admirable device of spurs."

CHAPTER VIII

Brailes and the Old Religion

THE ash-trees were stript of leaves in unprotected places, but by Ettington the beeches kept still their glorious bronze, as on November 5, Gunpowder Treason and Plot day, I went to Brailes, which lies beyond Halford and commonplace little Shipston at one of the far ends of Warwickshire. The approach to Brailes is kingly, as unforgettable in its way as the view of Burton Dassett or Chesterton, which we have yet to visit. Not that the village—or town—is anyway remarkable, save for an old stone house and a little Roman Catholic chapel like a barn at a small lane's end ; but Brailes church tower is superb, and above the village rises the marvellous Castle Hill, an earthwork tree-crowned on an outlying spur sundered from the neighbouring range of hills by a cleft, which has been deepened by the hand of man.

There is no record of the vanished castle on the top of this impregnable looking hill, but the Earls of Warwick, who succeeded the king as lord of Brailes, may sometimes have sojourned in that remote spot, for were not the thirteenth century serfs on this estate, besides their work of stonepicking, nut-gathering, ploughing and reaping, compelled to find forage for three horses for three nights *if the lord kept his Christmas at Brailes ?*

Part of the king's dues from Warwick, according to Domesday, were reckoned in measures of honey, while part of those of Brailes took the form of horse-loads of salt, fetched, I suppose,

from Droitwich. Salt was a most valuable commodity in days when it was so largely used to preserve meat for winter use. At the great reaping in the thirteenth century the lord gave as part of the reward of the reapers his second-best cheese, and filled for them with precious salt the vessel in which the cheese had been made.

The church of St. George with its tower, 120 feet high, to be seen a long way off, is so splendid that it is called " the cathedral of the Feldon "—the south Warwickshire Feldon, or field country, as distinguished from the Arden, or woodland. The Earl of Warwick gave it to the inevitable canons of Kenilworth, and its architecture is worthy of their fame. They built it in the finest Decorated style of the fourteenth century, though the thirteenth century lancets in the south wall were suffered to remain. The canons were not sparing of beautiful carving ; above the windows runs a little cornice with heads, animals and flowers ; the parapet is filled with flowing tracery and there is a sanctus bell-cote. Such is the outside of the church of Brailes. Unhappily a restoration took place in 1879 ; but even though the interior be empty, swept and garnished, nothing can take away the church's magnificent proportions, and mar the lines of the tracery of the windows. The building triumphs over the restorer's cruel hand. There are inscriptions to various local worthies of the Bishop family (of whom more presently), and a monument to Richard Davis shows a collection of books, such as are often seen in memorials in these parts, the clasps being turned towards the spectator. The inscription runs :—" Heere lyes intrusted in a full assurance of a Glorious Resurrection what is left of Richard Davis, gentleman, sometime Mr. in

arts in Exceter Colledg in Oxford, who whilst he liv'd was the joy of his parents, the Comforter of the Poore, the Counsellor of the Rich, and after he had endured 15 months paine and anguish with a Job like patience most willingly exchang'd this life for a better, the 19th day of January in the 36 yeare of his age Anno Dni 1639."

A noontide bell rings at Brailes, some survival of ancient days. There is a much worn mediæval tomb in the churchyard.

As in Tysoe, there cling to this part of the country reminiscences of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. It is a curious point to consider how it came to be that the Kingmaker, whose career was so stormy and whose sojourns in this country were so short and broken, came to connect himself so nearly with this little place, and to found in this church a guild and chantry with two priests to pray for his soul. It looks as if he had had at one time a mind to be buried here. Maybe it was the dedication of the church that attracted him, for it seems that he must have chosen St. George for patron. At least it was by the favour of God and St. George that he trusted to steer a one-masted fishing smack from the coast of Devon by Land's End to friendly Calais and thus save his father and nephew (later Edward IV) the deserted and fugitive leaders of the House of York. The shield figured in Dugdale bearing the Beauchamp-Neville arms, formerly no doubt in the window of the chantry chapel, has gone.

There is a little Roman Catholic chapel hard by the church, up a stone flight of stairs, at the end of a small lane. It adjoins the old home of the Bishops, where, I was told, there is a priest's hiding-hole. The little town has a connection

with William Bishop, an active Roman Catholic missionary and controversialist, who was born here about 1550. After a period of study at Rome he was sent to England to "convert souls," but was taken prisoner on his arrival and confined in gaol for many years. At the latter end of his life the tide turned, and as Bishop of Calcedon and head of a mission from Rome he had a good reception at the time negotiations were pending about Prince Charles' contemplated match with the Infanta of Spain. "He was sent into England by the Holy See," says a friendly account, "for the comfort of Roman Catholics, where he so modestly behaved himself, that he was by all, both Clergy and Senators, dearly beloved and honoured: and after imprisonments and all sorts of afflictions patiently endured for the true religion, died in peace near London" 1624.

So this year, as the resident priest reminded me, is the tercentenary of the departed Bishop.

There is no record how long the observance of the Old Religion has been carried on in this little barn-like upper room. Tradition says that in the days of the persecution there were pulleys which lifted the altar into the loft above when the authorities made search for incriminating evidence. As the only entrance to the loft was through the Bishops' house, there was time to let the altar down again, when the search-party directed their energies to the garret. The boards of the garret, the Rev. Father Doran said, were laid lengthways until they were above the altar, but cross-wise above it. One must not enquire too narrowly into the truth of these old tales. Anyway the tradition is a good tradition—as Mr. Potter says of that of Sir Thomas Lucy and the Halford

bowls. The chapel was very simple and the priest said the congregation did not wish it to be changed or decorated.

The only drawback for old people was the height of the exterior stairs.

The chief treasures of the little chapel are, however, embroidered vestments of the kind one seldom sees outside a museum. There were two damask sets of the eighteenth century, a rose-coloured one for Mid-Lent and Mid-Advent, and a splendid chasuble and stole, traditionally said to be the work of Catharine of Braganza, the Queen of Charles II, with gorgeous flowers in red and gold thread and an antependium, or altar frontal, to match, but the chief rarity is the chasuble said to be the work of Catherine of Arragon with a six-winged angel on a wheel, surrounded by clusters of golden rays, with double eagles and conventional flowers on a green ground. Scrolls bear the lettering " Da gloria [m] Deo "—Give glory to God. It is a wonderful piece of work in the line of mediæval tradition, and should be kept with exceeding care.

The little picturesque inn is called the " George," betokening a connection with the church. Maybe it was the church or parish ale-house in ancient times. I am told there is good entertainment there, and for myself would desire nothing better than to spend (with good company) Christmas at Brailes like my lord of Warwick in days of old, and see the outline of Castle Hill clad with snow, or after foggy days and nights, when the rime clothes the trees in white, watch the sun go down small, clear and burning red in the frosty air.

One thing to beware of, children, especially if you go to Brailes fair from Shipston and return in twilight over the bridge, is the headless ghost! Take hands, quick, and r-r-run!

The number of bogies, hereabouts, passes belief. There is the ghostly coach at Tysoe, where the man sits (no doubt) who ran away with another lady love on his wedding eve, deserting his expectant bride, and—mais c'est affreux! the one-wheeled coach at Ilmington, a coach wherein a murdered man sits. You may see the trace of the wheel on the hillside.

Listen! the bells at Brailes should put all spectres to flight.

Mr. Beresford Stevens ("Coventry Herald") was the first, I think, to print an account of the Brailes vestments.

COMPTON WYNYATES

CHAPTER IX

Compton Wynyates

—" I must and shall "

THIS is not a house built by mortal hands and the sweat of human toil. I tell you it is an enchanted place. Look at it from the hill beyond in the sultry stillness of a summer's day. Some wizard took a posy of soft red poppies with their black stamens, waved his wand, and behold! in a dip of the wooded hills, a peerless dwelling of brick and timber and stone.

It is unthinkable that mere mortals should for centuries have lived in such a place, eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—and such marriages, with attendant fortunes to turn the brain!—fighting and repelling besiegers in war time, spending money like water at the polling booth. But it is so. Indeed in consequence of those spendthrift eighteenth century election times, the furniture of Compton Wynyates must needs be sold, and had the lord's will been obeyed, the house had been destroyed. But the steward, John Berrill, of happy memory, patching and repairing as cheaply as he could, kept alive (may one say?) the house with its twisted chimney stacks and black oak beams.

The beautiful place was built in the early days of Henry VIII before he grew gross, and that little slit of a mouth of his took such cruel lines. There is a bedroom called after him with a massive bedstead of later date, and in the window

are his arms and those of Catharine of Arragon. Sir William Compton, the builder, began his official life as Henry VIII's page, when the latter was Duke of York, and kept the monarch's favour when so many who had climbed high fell low. He died of the sweating sickness in 1528. His grandson married Anne, one of the Spencers of Wormleighton, the poet Spenser's Charillis, and entertained Elizabeth here in 1572.

The son of this pair, first Earl of Northampton, made the famous "baker's basket" match with a daughter of Sir John Spencer, a wealthy London merchant. Sir John forbade the match and hid his daughter away, but the lover, disguised as the baker's boy, brought the bread early one morning, (earning a word of praise and a sixpence for being thus matutinal from the deluded father) and the bread being left, carried away in its place the lady love. Spencer was enraged at this deception, but Queen Elizabeth patched up the quarrel and stood god-mother together with the grandfather to the Comptons' heir. Whatever pale wraiths other departed Comptons may seem like now, the heroine of the baker's basket, with her imperativeness, her magnificent ideas of the wants of a lady of quality, is very much alive still.

"My sweet life," she writes to her husband, "I pray and beseech you to grant to me, your most kind and loving wife, the sum of £2,600 quarterly to be paid. Also I would besides that allowance have £600 quarterly to be paid for the performance of charitable works, and these things I would not, neither will be, accountable for. Also I will have three horses for my own saddle, that none shall dare to lend or borrow; none lend but I, none borrow but you. Also I would have two Gentlewomen, lest one should be sick or have some other

let. Also believe it, it is an indecent thing for a gentlewoman to stand mumping alone, when God hath blessed their lord and lady with a great estate. Also when I ride a-hunting or a-hawking or travel from one house to another I will have them attending; so, for either of those said women I must and will have, for either of them, a horse. Also I will have two Coachmen, one for my own Coach, the other for my women. Also at any time when I travel, I will be allowed not only caroches and spare horses for me and my women, but will have such Carriages as will be fitting for all orderly, not pestering my things with my women's, nor theirs with either chambermaid's, not theirs with washmaid's.....Also, for that it is undecent to crowd up myself with my gentleman-usher in my coach, I will him to have a convenient horse to attend me either in city or country. And I must have two footmen. And my desire is that you defray all the charges for me. And for myself, besides my yearly allowance, I would have twenty gowns of apparel, six of them excellent good ones, eight of them for the country, and six other of them very excellent good ones. Also I would have to put in my purse £2,000 and £200 and so you to pay my debts. Also I would have £6,000 to buy me jewels and £4,000 to buy me a pearl chain. Now, seeing I have been, and am, so reasonable unto you, I pray you do find my children apparel and their schooling and all my servants, men and women, their wages. Also, I will have all my houses furnished and my lodging-chambers to be suited with such furniture as is fit; as beds, stools, chairs, suitable cushions, carpets, silver warming pans, cupboards of plate, fair hangings, and such like. So for my drawing-chamber in all houses, I will have them delicately furnished both with

hangings, couch, canopy, glass, carpet, chairs, cushions, and all things thereunto belonging..... So now, " she concludes, " that I have declared to you what I would have, and what is that I would not have, I pray you when you are Earl to allow me £6,000 more than I now desire, and double attendance."

We doubt not that the lady's " sweet life," who had become possessed of his father-in-law's immense wealth, complied with these modest requirements of his " most kind and loving wife " and (incidentally) provided apparel and schooling for their offspring.

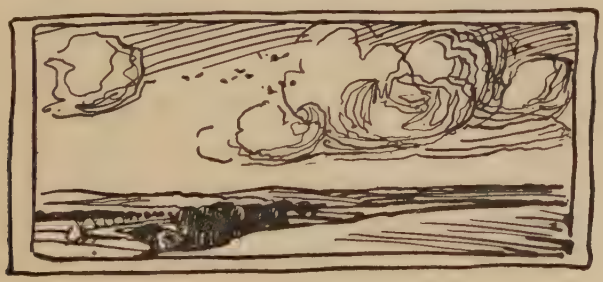
Their son Spencer, Earl of Northampton, played a memorable part in the Civil Wars as lord-lieutenant of Warwickshire. He was killed at the battle of Hopton Heath, scornfully refusing to surrender to " base rogues and rebels." Clarendon speaks finely of his character and temper as a soldier. " All distresses," says the historian, " he bore like a common man, and all wants and hardnesses as if he had never known plenty or ease ; most prodigal of his person in danger, and would often say that if he outlived these wars he was certain never to have so noble a death."

The Earl of Northampton's four sons distinguished themselves in the battles of the Civil War. One, we may remember, fought at the action at Halford Bridge. Another, Sir William, who is buried in the church here, held out in the siege of Banbury in 1644. When this house was garrisoned by Purefoy, for the Parliament, the Comptons unavailingly tried to raise the siege, and the bloodstains in the soldiers' quarters, called the barracks, are said to be a relic of the carnage of the fight.

The sixth brother of the house was that Bishop of London

who ought by rights to have been a fighter too. He was tutor to the Princesses Mary and Anne, daughters of James II, and was suspended from his duties as a bishop by the unforeseeing king. The bishop accompanied Princess Anne in that rather amusing flight of hers from London to Nottingham at the beginning of the Revolution. Macaulay tells with something of a smile, how the ecclesiastic, who wore a buff-coat and jackboots "with a sword at his side and pistols in his holsters," accepted the position of colonel of the body-guard of gentlemen of that plump and unromantic Protestant heroine. The bishop's portrait is at Compton Wynyates.

It was James, the eldest of these brothers, who, after the Restoration, rebuilt the church, destroyed in the Civil Wars, and his initials I.N. appear on the leaden water-spouts. The family displayed in electioneering the same wholeheartedness they had shown on the field of battle. They almost ruined themselves quite gaily at the Northampton election of 1768 when a vast amount of port was drunk and a vast amount of money spent. So embarrassed did the earl's affairs become that money was raised by the sale of the furniture here, and the fiat (happily disregarded) went forth that Compton Wynyates should be destroyed.



CHAPTER X

Compton Wynyates

—The Village Witch

THE house is built of rosy brick with chequers of blue here and there and mouldings of local stone. A beautiful contrast is made with the pervading red by the gable timbers, black with age, and the grey roof. The books, which know naught of wizards, say that some of its beauties, including the twisted chimneys, came from the Castle of Fulbrook, built by Henry V's brother John, Duke of Bedford, for Sir William Compton, having obtained the grant of that castle, hastened its ruin, and carried the materials off for his own use. The house is built round a quadrangle, and over the arch are Henry VIII's crown and supporters, the greyhound and griffin, while in the spandrels of the arch are the portcullis of Henry and the castle of Catherine of Arragon.

The rooms are full of charm. The great hall with its timber roof, possibly brought from Fulbrook, louvre, or opening for smoke, and minstrel gallery, gains from the simplicity and relative bareness of its plenishing. Very interesting is the panel on the screen, possibly from Fulbrook, showing knights in the tiltyard. Many of the ceilings are restored old work, and the carving and panelling over the drawing-room mantelpiece came from Sir John Spencer's house at Canonbury, Islington, with the lady who was carried off in the baker's basket. There are countless hiding places

in the house, which were perhaps not meant to hide in, and the beautifully panelled council-chamber has six doors, and is connected with a priest's room by no less than three staircases. In the priest's room is what purports to be a wooden altar-slab

WARWICKSHIRE LABOURER

with consecration crosses. The Comptons seem, however, to have gone with the times, and to have belonged to the Church of England, and no one quite knows why there should be this air of secret religious worship about the place. In a ground-floor room, also called the chapel, there are more mediæval carvings, one of the more usual kind, in which the Seven Deadly Sins ride gaily into Hell-mouth, where the Devil greets them, and another rarer sort, said to be a representation of Twelfth Night mummers, which ought to be reproduced in the interests of the study of dramatic art. The barracks or soldiers' quarters, where the blood-stains are, have been divided into servants' rooms, which to some extent invests them with commonplace.

The garden is modern, but nothing can exceed the charm of the trimmed and cut hedges, and the bushes of yew. It is topiary work of the most delightful kind. There is also a little brick dove-house, and Earl James's seventeenth century church, built in a square with double nave, deserves more than casual mention. It has been left alone and is very interesting to anyone wearied of the over-restored Gothic church of to-day. The monuments which Purefoy, the Parliamentary general, threw into the moat during the siege, were fished up, and lie here, mostly headless and broken, for all the finely carved alabaster cushions that remain. There is the effigy of Sir William (1528) on the north side, the builder of the house, his bare head on a tilting helmet. He wears a tabard or coat with flap sleeves, and arms on back and front, and a collar of SS. with the double rose. The figure at his feet is probably Werburgh, his wife, who was at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. On the other side, lie other effigies

most likely representing Henry, first baron, and his two wives. He died in 1589. Some of the other members of the family are buried at Castle Ashby, but there is a slab to Sir William, the gallant defender of Banbury Castle, who died 1663. A long series of decorative mortuary banners and hatchments form a complete record of the family, and a recent memorial consists of the sword of Lord Spencer Compton, killed at the Battle of Ypres. Will there ever be an end to this slaughter of the young and strong that we can so ill spare? It is decidedly an interesting church, and rather like a glorified pew of the Northamptons. Indeed, there is a monogram and coronet on one of the pew doors. The pulpit has its sounding-board and reading-desk almost like a three-decker. All the guide books speak of the charming ceiling with its sun, moon and stars, but these decorations had been whitewashed out when I saw the place. There is no chancel, and the square altar-rails look very quaint. I earnestly hope there never will be an attempt to make it Gothic and Anglican after the fashion of to-day.

Outside in the churchyard there is one interesting gravestone, that of Jane Story, who died October 31st, 1755, aged 87. She was a reputed witch. The belief in witchcraft has almost died out in Warwickshire, together with much that is picturesque of old days, but eighty years ago it was very prevalent, and any misfortune was attributed to a witch's malign powers. An old woman, who lived at Westwood Heath, near Coventry, in the eighteen forties, must have been a mine of the folklore of ancient days, and I have heard my father say that she held a witch could change herself into a tree, in order to avoid pursuit, afterwards making herself

human at will, unless it happened that a branch of the tree was cut off and bled, in which case she could never resume her old shape. Both Virgil and Dante tell us of the bleeding trees that speak with the voices of men. Of course witches were rendered innocuous if once you could draw their blood.

> "Blood will I draw on thee, thou art a witch,
> And straightway give thy soul to him thou serv'st,"

as Talbot calls out to La Pucelle in Henry VI (Part I. Act I. Scene V.), under the gates of Orleans. At Loxley two men were once out walking together, when one of them shot at a rabbit, and behold!—an old woman went past them bleeding at the shoulder, a proper witch! These evil creatures cast their spells apparently to no purpose. Near Weston-on-Sands, by Milcote Station, a waggoner was once driving his horses and they stopped dead and would not stir, for all he whipped them as hard as he could. An old woman came by and cried, "Hie! master, your hosses won't move!" He was so angry that he cut at them desperately hard, and the whip curled round the old woman's cheek so that the blood flowed fast. Then the horses galloped off, but I never heard where they pulled up at last.

A similar tale was told me the other day by a woman who had passed some time of her life at Long Compton, which is, as everybody knows, the very heart of the witches' country. There stands the magic ring of stones that once were men:—

> "If Long Compton I can see,
> King of England I shall be,"

said their leader, but he could not see Long Compton, and the witch replied :—

> " Stand still, men, and stand up, stone,
> For King of England thou shalt be none."

This is the tale. A mother suspected a neighbour of causing her daughter's illness. With the idea of drawing the witch's blood she " ran up the chure," (passage or alley-way), with a worsted needle, and scratched the arm of the supposed bringer of ill. The word " chure " is rather interesting ; I believe in the Northumberland dialect it appears as " chair," occuring in the classic tale of the witness who informed a bewildered judge that he was called Old Adam, that he had lived in Paradise (a street in Newcastle), before the Flood (a celebrated local inundation), and that he saw someone coming out of the " chair," eating a " brick," (some sort of loaf).

Great potency also lies in the sign of the cross. My old acquaintance of the worsted needle story told me that in her young days she had secretly put her scissors crosswise beneath the cushion of a chair, where a suspected woman was about to take her seat, in order to test the powers of the supposed witch by the holy symbol of the cross.

CHAPTER XI

Ettington and the People called Quakers

THE elms and oaks were still green or growing brown when I went to Ettington, but the ashes were yellowing fast and maples and chestnuts seemed to burn like flame. Here and there in the hedges the blackberry leaves gave a crimson touch, and the landscape became a riot of colour under an alternately blue and stormy sky. As for the blackberries, they were still plentiful and deep black ; past eating, though, and reason good, for does not the Devil come with his sootbag and empty it over them on Michaelmas day ? As for the flowers, only one or two blossoms of creamy meadowsweet remained of the glory of the summertime.

The road from Warwick to Ettington, which is one of the south Warwickshire highway villages, lies through the barley country—though in October the harvest is all gathered in—by Barford and Wellesbourne. On the right stands Hampton Lucy tower, and beyond the turn to Charlecote there is a glimpse of the far-off hills. There are—or it would be more proper to say there *were*—two Ettingtons besides hamlets more or less depopulated, Lambcote where George Fox once preached in 1678, and Thornden, where William Croft, the musician, was born. Nether Ettington is represented now by a park, a church in ruins, and a manor house ; while Upper Ettington stands on the high road, and has a new church, two little shops, and a population large enough, but not too large, to make gossip a fine art. When there are not too many people for everyone to know everything about everybody,

A BYE-LANE: ETTINGTON

the purchase of a wedding present, the price of a gravestone, can be discussed in all their bearings with that tireless show of human interest, that unerring preference for the concrete and neighbouring, as against the abstract and far-away, that distinguish the village mind.

I always hope that one piece of advice, which came from Ettington, may throw light on the hoax played on Malvolio in "Twelfth Night." It was given to a partnerless girl when her younger sister had come by a lover. She must, she was told, put on yellow stockings and dance in the pig-trough. Unfortunately there was no word of cross garters.

But there is little to see in Ettington, though there is so much to talk of, unless one may inspect the private mortuary chapel of the Shirleys—fragment of the parish church of St. Thomas of Canterbury—now alas! in great measure destroyed.

Perhaps to the bewildered mind of the eighteenth century villager, when the old order was changing with the Enclosure of the commons, it scarcely seemed remarkable that the ancient church should be removed from one end of the parish to the other. So many landmarks were shifting, why should the church stand as of old?

However, pulled down by act of Parliament the church was—it measured 126 feet from east to west, and 75 feet from north to south—and from the ruins of its magnificence was erected in Upper Ettington a sorry successor that survived the displacement only about a hundred years. Now a third church, handsome but always new, adorns the village street. The old church, as we have said, was under the protection of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Had all this occurred in the

thirteenth century, we may be sure the "holy blissful martyr" would have appeared to protect his own.

The people of Ettington take pride in the pedigree of their squires, the Shirleys, and even the redoubtable Mr. Horace Round, terror of all those who boast with imperfect data of Norman blood, can find no flaw in their tale of descent. The present owners come in direct line from Saswalo, who held Ettington from the Ferrars at Domesday, more than 800 years ago.

One of the Shirleys—his tomb is in the mortuary chapel—served in a parliament of Edward I's time, as knight of the shire, and another was slain in the Battle of Shrewsbury in the armour of Henry IV. But soon the Shirleys ceased to play a part in Warwickshire history, living beyond the county's borders, their place being taken by the Underhills, who obtained through marriage a lease of the manor of Ettington in the fifteenth century. This family deserves more than a passing mention. Men of the clan appear almost suddenly upon the scene, spread themselves into village after village, and become linked with notable names. Then they seem to vanish from among the gentry of the shire. The first to be noted is John, who came from Wolverhampton, and at the end of the fifteenth century married Agnes daughter of Thomas Porter, thereby acquiring the benefit of the Ettington lease. From them descended Edward Underhill of Hunningham, the "hot-gospeller," a warm adherent of Lady Jane Grey, Antony, subject of a beautiful epitaph in Ettington old church, and William, whose tragic fate is linked with Idlicote. This last-named in 1597 sold New Place to Shakespeare, and in this house the poet lived for the last years of his life.

It is to Shakespeare that the epitaph on Antony Underhill in the old church has been rather rashly ascribed, but the style of the verses recalls rather the influence of Spenser, who, so far as I know, had no connection with the Underhill family. The lines were probably written on a tablet hanging by the tomb, like those in honour of Leicester's Countess in the Beauchamp chapel at Warwick. The tablet has been lost, but it has been possible to restore the verses, which tell not only of the dead man's virtues, as the wont of epitaphs is, but very beautifully of a vision and a "question put" to him as he lay dying.

AN EPITAPH.

And true report upon the death of Anthony Underhill, the sonne of Thomas Underhill, of Nether Eatington, who died the XVIth day of July Ano DM. 1587.

Anthony Underhill lyeth buried here in stone,
It were but vayne for to obscure his name;
Though no name write the death of him alone,
Yet Heaven and earth will still record the same.
Who lived to dye, who dyed agayne to live,
With humble hart did all the world forgive.

Noe speech but prayer, noe mind but Heaven with him,
Noe hope of life, noe word of vayne delight;
His whole desire to conquere death and sinne,
With hart and voice, with minde and all his might,
Whose glorious death and happy end was such,
Which twentie sawe, that did rejoice them much.

For when the time of 's fatall houre drew neare,
Rose up with joye, a vision he espyes;
Behold, quoth he, for yonder doth appeare
My Saviour Christ, I see him with myne eyes.
A joyful spectacle was p'sented then,
In sight of God, of angells, saints, and men.

And after pause, to shew his gladsome fitt,
He spoke and sayd, I had a question putt,
Though it were hard, yett I have answered itt ;
With that he syhed, and so his eyes he shutt.
Thus sayled he into more quiet coast,
Still praysing God, and so gave up the ghost.

As dreams doe slyde, as bubbles rise and fall,
As flowers doe fade and flourish in an hower,
As smoke doth rise, and vapours vanish all,
Beyond the witt or reach of human power ;
As somer's heat doth parch the withered grasse,
Such is our stay, so lyfe of man doth pass."

The last verse has certainly something of the haunting quality of the lines in Acrasia's " Bower of Bliss " in the " Faerie Queene."

" So passeth in the passing of a day,
Of mortal life, the leaf, the bud, the flowre."

It is a pity we cannot make out the lines to be the youthful Shakespeare's, as he is quite likely to have known the Underhills, but we have no religious verse from his pen.

Thus a transept, a tower and some ruins represent (I am told) the old church of St. Thomas ; but if the buildings of the Church of England have fared ill, the " people called Quakers " have enjoyed a piece of rare fortune. In 1681, Samuel Lucas of Upper Ettington by will devised to trustees a little close " with the intent that a meeting house for the use of the people called Quakers should on a part of the said ground be built, and that the other part of the said piece of ground should be used as a burying place."

Such was the beginning of the little Meeting-house, of which in 1710 William and John Bevington and others were appointed

trustees. It stands yet between a green garden and the tiny burial place with a few mounds of nameless graves, untouched, perfect still, the whole building and its surroundings breathing peace. There is an old door left, studded with nails. It has a wooden latch. Two small windows in the wall by the door and one in the gable let the light in on a spotlessly clean, whitewashed room with light oak settle benches, one at the end being raised for the minister's seat. The lower part of the walls is lined with rush matting, and some of broader strands covers the seats. The place looks as if it had never been changed since the days when a handful of earnest people made this retreat a haven of quiet in a world where many of them had been compelled to fight with beasts at Ephesus. They could all remember the days when men like William Dewsbury lay in a fœtid pit at Warwick, the dungeon still to be seen in Northgate Street, under Saunderson Miller's Shire-hall. Dewsbury was kept in gaol nineteen years.

I have been told of the beauty and peace which pervaded this little room by one who "went to meeting" forty years ago, and of the faces of the Friends as they sat in the little whitewashed room waiting for the illumination of the Inner Light. It would need the gentle Elia to picture for us with his pen the old lady in dove-grey silk, poke bonnet, and folded white shawl, the old gentleman in brown broad-cloth, inclining to purple, and broad-brimmed hat, and the rows of other restful faces and quiet hands. Maybe descendants of Ettington Friends, like many of their kind, have carried blessings these last ten years into the waste and desolate places of the earth. Among local Quakers, the most noted was John Bevington, of whom it was said that, "being of a cheerful, active, generous

temper, quick of apprehension and of sound judgment, he became more than ordinarily useful in his generation as a man, as well as a minister." He died 1755. In the next century one of three sisters of the same old Quaker family married a Friend, who bore the delightful name of Theophilus Pegler, one of the regular attendants here at meeting. Let it be accounted unto him for righteousness that though the people called Quakers disapprove of the vanity of stage plays, Mr. Pegler lent his pony and cart to some young people intent on a visit to Stratford, and *asked no questions*, though the visit was timed for a performance of "Romeo and Juliet." So the young people set off for Juliet's country of Verona; when they returned, the Ettington lanes were alive and musical with nightingales' song.

CHAPTER XII

Pasture Country of the South East

—Burton Dassett and Fenny Compton

IT was October when I went to Burton Dassett, and the hedges were brown, but touched with red and gold; the ploughed earth was dark, the stubble almost colourless, and from the valley I saw the ridge with beacon and windmill, as a gleam of silver lit up a stormy sky.

It is a lonesome place. Burton Dassett is the strangest village of any in the shire. Village, did I say? There was a village once, I suppose, but now there stand on the hill with the far prospect, nothing but a great dark grey church, a vicarage, a holy well, a windmill, a forsaken quarry and a fifteenth century beacon-house. In olden time, I am sure, there was also a gallows. People talk of ghosts here, but rationalists will have the curious lights, sometimes visible, to be nothing but marsh fires, the will o' the wisp. It may be. I would rather think it is the ghost of Sir Edward Belknap, the beacon builder, returned to re-visit his money-making sheep-pastures. Or perhaps 'tis the spirit of some man of old time, who helped to plough the linchets on Gredenton Hill, and by reason of an evil deed done in the flesh cannot find rest. They say henbane, a rare plant in these parts, grows here, and certainly the "cursed hebanon" of "Hamlet" is in keeping with the place, and a hawk, which I saw hovering over the hill, seemed also to be in harmony with the loneliness of the autumn scene.

Fenny Compton, which lies in the valley below the Burton Dassett ridge, has picturesque brown stone houses with here and there decaying thatch and a church spire backed by the mournful hills. There is an old place in the village street which looks as if it had belonged to a church or monastery. A gable with a fine fourteenth century window is tacked-on to a dwelling of later date. Ribton Turner says that there is a wyvern carved on the beams of the kitchen roof here, and that another forms the latch of the casement. The house was shut up and tenantless, and looked as if it would go to ruin with the broken windows letting in the rain.

NORTH END, BURTON DASSETT

This village would form an admirable centre for sight-seeing. Trains run—but I fancy not very frequently—to Kineton on one line, and more frequently to Leamington on the other. There is an inn, the "Red Lion," with a sun-dial and motto, but I know not if there be good entertainment there.

The church of Fenny Compton is a homely and pleasant little place, but without any particular architectural adornment. It is chiefly of the fourteenth century, and the window tracery, put in by the canons of Kenilworth, is of Kenilworth stone. A monument to Elizabeth Croke, who died in 1719-20, aged nearly twenty-two, is not without pathos. "A most dutifull Child," the epitaph says, "in ye most difficult tryals, carefull to please and fearfull to offende." Weeping Cupids adorn the tomb.

A handsome sign-post, decorated with the bear and ragged staff, stands at the upper end of the village. It points uphill to Avon Dassett, ignoring Burton. Nevertheless, this is the way the traveller should pursue. I was beguiled into a proverbial short cut, (which I do not regret for the fine view it gave me of the linchets ploughed on Gredenton Hill), but the path by the blackberry hedge soon vanished, as paths will, and I was left undirected in a gorse-grown region, where the hedges towered high, and green fields ribbed with 'lands' showed the soil had once been under the plough. At length I found myself by the deserted quarry, near the beacon and the windmill, at the edge of the ridge, gazing far, far, over a tree-dotted plain, which seemed endless like the sea, bordered on the left by a line of faint grey hills. The Malverns are visible here and on fine days even the Wrekin. When the

beacon was lit up on the night of Edge Hill battle, 1642, its fires spread the news to Ivinghoe in Buckinghamshire, forty miles away, and thence to Harrow, so that the Londoners learned that there was war in England.

WELL-CHAMBER, BURTON DASSETT

Burton Dassett Beacon is, I believe, unique. Probably Sir Edward Belknap built it at the close of the fifteenth century, for it is displayed with the family arms. The small round tower has a conical roof, and an entrance door and two windows, one looking west towards Malvern, the other east towards High Cross. Probably a cresset, or iron pan filled with lighted tarred rope fixed on a pole upon the roof, flashed the signal to distant heights.

From the hillside a path led to a farmhouse lately ruined by fire, the Vicarage in a pleasant grove of trees, a well with a well-chamber above it, and a dark stone church with a fortress-like tower. The well-chamber, a little classic building which bears a mutilated date, probably 1634, covers the clear water within. It must be a holy well, since it is so near the church, which, however, is not dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Its waters, though, cannot have attained to the celebrity of St. John's and St. Mary's wells at Honiley of which traces remain in a field by St. John the Baptist's church in that place. There contrite sinners washed and bathed; the men in St. John's well, the women in St. Mary's, and after bathing, crept on their knees to the church, confessed, and were, I hope, forgiven. But we must return to Burton church, which, with its massive tower of the fourteenth century, has a quiet grandeur. Many styles have gone to make up the building. The north and south doorways are Norman, and there is some striking early English work in the north transept.

The interior is still more wonderful. It is white, empty and forsaken, while the rising of the steps at various points from the tower to the nave, from the nave to the chancel, and from the chancel to the altar, have a marvellous effect. It is quite unrestored. The windows retain their uncoloured glass, the floor its ancient quarries of warm red, and there are mediæval tiles such as can be seen at Wormleighton, near the font. The church probably owes much to its ancient lords, the De Sudley family, of whom one was a great benefactor to the canons of Arbury, where now George Eliot's Cheverels, the Newdigates, dwell. A nameless tomb, under an arch in the north transept, possibly marks the founder's burial place.

WARWICKSHIRE SHEPHERD

Underneath a window near is the slab of a pre-Reformation altar with five crosses symbolical of the five wounds of Christ.

The church has other interesting features. There is a fine early English window of five lancets in the north transept, and a twelfth century chancel arch leads to the chancel, which stands high above the nave and is, perhaps, of the early fourteenth century. A touch of the grotesque comes from the capitals of the pillars of the thirteenth century north arcade. These are adorned with winged beasts, topsy-turvy creatures, a dragon with a trefoiled leg, a squirrel with a nut and the holy symbol of the Agnus Dei.

The church and its surroundings have an atmosphere that is quite unique.

The history of the village is obscure, but so far as we know it, melancholy. In Domesday it possessed the high annual value of £20, as against £11, the annual value of Godiva's Coventry. Under Edward I there must have been a considerable population in the village and its hamlets. It passed from the De Sudleys to the Botelers—Sir Ralph Boteler was Henry VI's standard-bearer, and Lord Treasurer of England—and then to the Belknaps. Sir Edward Belknap, who was a servant both of Henry VII and Henry VIII, seems to have been a great agent in its depopulation. He put down twelve houses and turned 360 acres of ploughland to pasture, for which, however, in spite of the contemporary outcry against enclosures, being a man with courtly influence, he obtained the king's pardon. It is always so fatally easy to feel convinced that whatever benefits ourselves must incontestably be for the common good, and we are not surprised to find a contemporary document urging, no doubt

on Sir Edward's authority, that "the decay of tillage was no prejudice, but benefit to the public." It drew a very glowing picture of the prosperity of the village under the new régime, and particularly dwells on the benefit Belknap's action had conferred on the church. "The Church and Ornaments were then in better condition than before," it says, "having since cost the parish CC li. (£200)....., and, whereas, before they had one Priest, then there were two, and many clerks performing Divine Service, and divers times with Pricksong, none such having been kept before, by reason of the Disability of the Parishioners." The village, it continues, was able to entertain more travellers, the worth of the benefice had increased, and the children were better taught. Altogether Burton Dassett was a little heaven upon earth. And yet.....what happened to the twelve families compelled to wander?

Going home towards Fenny Compton, there passed me a flock of white-faced Cheviot sheep. They are hardier than the Shropshires and other local breeds hereabouts, and do not require to be folded and watched with such care in the lambing time. I know of an old-time shepherd, who would sit up night after night with the sheep, for three weeks or a month, though he also did his work in the day. He nodded in a chair by the kitchen fire with a jug of beer and some toast by his side, waking up every hour or so to light a lantern and take a look at the ewes in the wattled fold. He is still alive, but shut in with the barrier of deafness. How I should love to hear him discourse of old ways and old times.

CHAPTER XIII

Wormleighton and the Poets

WORMLEIGHTON lies close to Fenny Compton, in an upland country with wide views where the wind plays over the pastures. It is country our ancestors found temptingly suitable for grazing ground, since sheep might perish from rot in damp fields which lie low. It is easy of access by rail. The lanes hereabouts are, however, so untouched, the little villages with their ancient houses and twisting streets so picturesque and happy, that it is pleasant to make a longer journey of it, particularly in autumn, when trees and hedges are full of subtle colouring and grey sheep feed under the shadow of grey ricks in pastures that are almost grey.

The way of all ways—to ride or drive—lies through Southam, under Butt Hill with its windmill, past Napton, red and high among the trees, by gated roads and unfrequented lanes with high luxuriant hedges through the stone villages of Prior's Marston and Prior's Hardwick. These last are nearly as untouched as the villages under Edge Hill, but are (it seems) happier. Here and there tiles have replaced thatch on cottage roofs, but to see cottages repaired in any way rejoices the heart. Now these villages are Lord Spencer's, but anciently they formed part of Leofric and Godiva's bounteous endowment of the Priory of Coventry.

At Prior's Hardwick it behoves one to follow the twists and turns of the village road, until by the side of a little green

place stands the lichen powdered, yellow stone church in a church-yard planted with dark trees. When I saw it, a gypsy caravan from Warwick fair had pulled up on the turf, making the prettiest harmony of blues and greens you ever beheld. The church is a good specimen of the Decorated period in spite of restoration; within is a worn effigy and actually some plain but irridescent glass. Alack! that so often modern figures of saints—like a bit of the Middle Ages gone wrong—shut out the green of the outside world.

So at last we come to the village of Wormleighton, five hundred feet above sea level, with the relics of the noble house of the Spencers, once a quadrangle, now a two-storied block of Tudor brick, with a tower, a few detached buildings and Lord Spencer's gatehouse, built under James I. This house the Spencers at first dwelt in alternately with the better-known Althorp; but in 1646 during the Civil Wars the Royalists destroyed the greater part to prevent its use as a garrison by the enemy. It is now a farmhouse, but still contains beautiful relics of its past history.

Now first a word as to the bygone owners of Wormleighton. These have been people of importance in their day, such as the De Clintons, who built Kenilworth Castle, and Simon Mountford of Coleshill, who met with a tragic fate. Being a staunch Yorkist, and living in uncertain times, when kings came and went like shadows, Mountford was minded to help Perkin Warbeck to vindicate his claim to the throne of England against Henry VII. So he sent over his son with aid in money to the Pretender, much as many a Scots laird did in Prince Charlie's day, and for this came to be hanged and quartered as a traitor at Tyburn gallows. As for his

son, who had entered on this dangerous mission, he was executed, but near Coventry, so that men of that neighbourhood should know King Henry's might. The Coventry Annals tell how "Sir Henry Mumford and Sir Robert Mallorie were beheaded under Binley gallows for treason; their heads put upon Bablake and Grey Friars' gates, and their bodies buried at the Grey Friars." Thereafter Wormleighton passed to William Cope, cofferer of the king's household.

It was Cope who sold Wormleighton to the Spencers, but first with an eye to profit he put down ploughland to pasture with results which horrified contemporary moralists, and which Wolsey's Commission of 1517 recorded but could not remedy. Sixty persons were displaced, it is said, as a result of enclosure here, "and have gone tearfully thence and were compelled to wander and thus, it may be supposed, died of hunger." It is to the credit of John Spencer, Cope's successor, that he rebuilt some of the cottages ruined by the former owner of the estate.

There is little doubt that in those days the sheep's was a golden fleece. John Spencer, who died in 1522, kept house at Wormleighton "with sixty persons of his family,"—a patriarchal touch, and patriarchal too were the flocks of his descendants. His great-great-grandson of the time of James I, Robert, Baron Spencer of Wormleighton—his arms with the date 1613 can be seen over the gateway of the manor house—was said to be the richest man in England. His family, though of ancient descent, seemed to the old nobility like the Howards mere wool-plutocrats of the new order. Lord Arundel in an altercation with Spencer declared with some heat, that at a certain bygone period his opponent's ancestors

WORMLEIGHTON

had been "keeping sheep." "While my ancestors were keeping sheep, as you say," retorted Spencer, "your Lordship's ancestors were plotting treason."

The interest of the line centres in the family of Sir John Spencer, grandson of the first Sir John. He married Catherine, daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson, a rich London merchant, a marriage which made the Spencers kin to the Washingtons, later of Sulgrave, Northants, ancestors of the first President of the United States. Another kinsman—no trafficker in the golden fleece, but poor shepherd with "oaten quill"—was Edmund Spenser, the poet. He dedicated poems to the daughters of the Spencer-Kitson marriage, to "Phyllis, the flower of rare perfection," who herself essayed verse, to Charillis, who belongs to the story of Compton Wynyates, and sweet Amaryllis, the youngest, but the "highest in degree," speaking of them as

> ". . . . . the sisters three,
> The honour of the noble familie,
> Of which I, meanest, boast myself to be."

Amaryllis furnishes a happy link between great poets. She was the wife of, first, Ferdinando, Lord Strange, later Lord Derby, also a dabbler in verse and patron of the company of actors to which Shakespeare is supposed to have belonged, and secondly, Lord Ellesmere, and in her old age Milton wrote the "Arcades" for her grandchildren to perform in her honour. In connection with the poet Spenser, it is worth noting that his love, Rosalind, was said on the authority of Dryden to have been connected with the wife of Sir Erasmus Dryden, one of the Wilkeses of Hodnel, near Wormleighton,

but it is generally thought that the "fair widow's daughter of the glen" had a Lancashire origin.

Yet another poetic connection of the family is afforded by Lady Dorothy Sidney, wife of Henry Spencer, first Earl of Sunderland, the "Saccharissa" of the poet Waller. In old age, Lady Sunderland asked Waller if he would again write verses in her honour, as he had done in the past. "When you are as young, Madam," answered the poet cruelly, "and as handsome as you were then."

But the morning is cold and fresh and we have been waiting long outside the house at Wormleighton.

The stone gateway is more recent than the Tudor block behind. It is Jacobean work of Robert, Lord Spencer's time, and bears the royal arms, rose and thistle, and the date 1613. The block behind is of Henry VIII's time, of beautiful brick with stone dressings—note the carvings of the corners. Though it may not have had the glamour of Compton Wynyates, still Wormleighton must have been a splendid house before it was all but ruined in the Civil Wars. Here and there the windows have been modernized, but the north side, where the ancient entrance was, keeps its ancient lines. Finer still is the east end, where an untouched bay-window of six lights can be seen from the farmhouse garden, which was mournfully autumnal when I saw it, as if to match the dwelling's decay. There is an array of shields—heiress's coats-of-arms, and the Spencer fret—without and within, though modern domesticities have somewhat interfered with the heraldry. Yet it is good the old house shelters people still. All about are old beams and fine windows, but upstairs the great Star Chamber, as it is called, has been robbed of

its adornments. This very year (1923), Lord Spencer took away the panelling with the gilt stars and the fireplace of stone beautified with heraldry, so that there is a gap in the wall where it once stood. I suppose the owner wanted to have

WORMLEIGHTON

his treasures near at hand, at Althorp, but the moving has involved a wreckage, and beauties of craftmanship have a trick of looking best in the home for which they were made.

It is empty, but oh!—what a room for a fanciful child to play in, and weave old stories about the past! Ah! Phyllis and Charillis and sweet Amaryllis, did you once dance here in your ruffs and hoops and farthingales, or touch the strings of the lute? Was Master Spenser with you to repeat some of the verses with which old Time has dealt more kindly than he has done with the house of your fathers?

CHAPTER XIV

The Way to Chesterton; Whitnash and Harbury

IT is a far cry from Wormleighton to Chesterton, though those that care to take the Bishop's Itchington road will see a magnificent view of the Burton Dassett and Napton Hills. For those who walk from Leamington, it is for some way past

BISHOP'S ITCHINGTON

the cemetery, a dreary road. The intermediate villages of Whitnash and Harbury furnish good examples, the first, of the timber-built village, and the second of that of stone. When

I last walked to Whitnash, the great elms were still splendid with leaves but roaring and rocking in the autumn storm, and the grey green of their branches seemed mist-like, as one gazed up through them to the deep-grey sky. Of the ancient elm before the church, only the stump of the trunk is left. Whitnash has great black and white barns with bulging sides, and the thatch coated with velvet moss and the lichen-covered tiles showed a thousand hues in the sunlight.

I tried to open the church door, but was warned in time, by hearing the parson's voice within. It is not, as I remember, an interesting church, though it stands upon an ancient earth-work, and before a thorough restoration obliterated interesting features, there was a talk of some herring-bone masonry. Within is a brass to Benedict Medley, Clerk of the Signet under Henry VII, one of the new Tudor nobility. His son helped to depopulate Tachbrook.

There is a way by the Golf Club to Harbury, still over desolate country, but the view widens as the road mounts higher, and the hedges with fluttering leaves and crimson berries of deadly nightshade spoke of autumn in all its glory.

Presently, Highdown Clump, from which height maybe Roman scouts gazed over the country in days gone by, appeared on the right, and Inigo Jones's grey windmill on the hill by Chesterton stood out against the sky.

Harbury, the first stone village of south-east Warwickshire, lies the other side of the Fosse Road, on rising ground. The village, which has maintained its population through all the agricultural disasters of the nineteenth century, owes some of its prosperity to the lime-works near. Its economic history would, I am sure, repay investigation. The land about was

HARBURY MANOR HOUSE

never good for grazing, so that it afforded no temptation to sheep farmers to make enclosures in days when wool brought wealth.

I know nothing of the history of Harbury, save that, for some reason or other, it was wasted by William the Conqueror's army before the Domesday Survey. A family named Wagstaffe once lived here, and were of some account, but seem to have vanished.

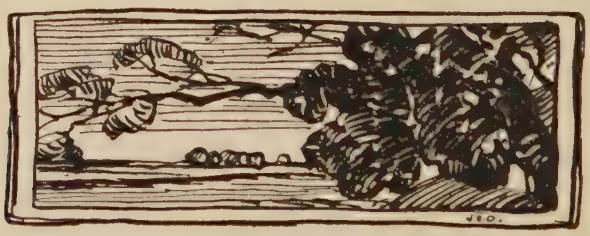
LIME WORKS, STOCKTON, NEAR HARBURY

Among Harbury vicars was Jago, the Warwickshire poet, who wrote the eighteenth century Miltonic poem of "Edge Hill," still readable, at least by those who love their county well. He also printed a sermon in 1755 on "The causes of

Impenitence considered," preached at Harbury, on the occasion of a conversation said to have passed between one of the inhabitants and an apparition in the churchyard belonging to that place. One of the worthy Jago's predecessors had a very evil reputation. According to a list of Warwickshire parsons compiled by the Elizabethan Puritans, Matthew Pickering, of Harbury, was nicknamed "Vicar of Hell" for his ruffianly life.

Picturesque stone houses abound in Harbury. One in the Bull Ring has the date 1616 upon it, the year of Shakespeare's death. The Manor House, though restored and made up, is very charming, and there is a most wonderful bit of street hard by, a row of houses which ought to be kept up at all costs. With one small break, it is a continuous line of thatch covering barn, cottages and farmhouse, a marvellous mixture of stone, timber and brick.

The old church, Heaven only knows for what reason, was pulled down in the last century, and the present one built. There is a brass left in it, commemorating a member of the Wagstaffe family.



CHAPTER XV

Chesterton, the Mill and the Lollards

THE roll of the hills is like a bit of downland. The solitude of the place, the weight of the history that attaches to it, oppress the imagination. On the hill-top stands the stone-arched windmill, a landmark over all the countryside. I saw the church and the black tombs in the churchyard under a dark and sorrowful sky. It is a haunted place.

Harbury does not stir the imagination like Chesterton. The way I chose to the latter place showed the long view northwards, and the barley fields stood out pale golden against the grey distant plain under a slate-hued cloud. The knapweed that turns black and dry in September was still purple, and the hawkweeds gold. The elderberries too, were turning purple in the hedge. Soon the great windmill with its domed roof and quiet sails came in sight, the windmill that Inigo Jones built for Sir Edward Peyto, in 1632.

It is thought that Benedict Arnold of Rhode Island, in the States, born in Leamington, 1615, copied Chesterton Mill, which he must often have seen in his boyhood, for the building at Newport, known as the Old Stone Mill, or the Round Tower. Longfellow, with a notion that this mill on the American coast was erected by the Vikings, has written fantastically about it in "The Skeleton in Armour." The

hero of that poem puts to sea with his love, and they sail to the shores of the West—

> "Three weeks we westward bore,
> And when the storm was o'er,
> Cloudlike we saw the shore
> Stretching to leeward;
> There for my lady's bower
> Built I this lofty tower,
> Which to this very hour
> Stands looking seaward."

But there is no reason to suppose that the Newport tower dates from those early days.

Alas! Inigo Jones's mill has not worked for many years. Those inevitable economic laws! The New World sends flour into this country even more conveniently than wheat. English milling is decayed, and those who feed animals deplore the dearness of grist. The sentimentalist heaves a sigh over the quiet sails that have been so busy in the past. If only a sentimentalist with money, and no mind to spend it on horses or diamonds, should come to Chesterton and send the sails flying round again, and do the like at Butt Hill, Napton, and at Burton Dassett, where mills stand idle.....but we live in a world where facts are real and hard.

It is pleasant to think that the little stone watermill, with the classic doorway also seventeenth century, still grinds grist. It stands picturesquely below by a pool, overgrown with water plants. This pool—like those of Southam Holt and Itchington Holt—is partly fed by salt springs, and has a rare flora, so botanists say, for the golden-dock, the

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sea-club rush, the celery, and the loose sedge grow there; but I fear I am not learned in such things. The waters of the pool have a brackish taste. Below the hill there stand three cottages, which form Chesterton Green. It must once have been a much larger place. Rous, the Guys-cliff antiquary, bewailed its depopulation in the fifteenth century. Whether the ploughland was early enclosed for grazing, and the men, who had followed the plough drifted away, I cannot tell. The population now numbers about 150 souls, and a heavy toll was taken of it—as may be seen by the memorial in the church—by the Great War.

Upon the hill ahead the little church stands, but for a single cottage, alone, and I could hardly endure the sadness of the little ancient churchyard. One should go thither under a bright sun in the spring when the cowslips are in the fields and the land is glad, but never attempt to see that strange place under a lowering sky.

The church is unaisled, with an unbroken line of chancel and nave, and a battlemented parapet runs throughout its length. There are many buttresses, and the chancel is built of Kenilworth stone. The tower is late and low. Over the south porch is a sun-dial with the words—"See and be gone about your business." The south door has ball-flower work of the fourteenth century, and above the porch is some worn carving of canopied saints. In the churchyard wall to the north is a fine brick gateway with a pedimental head, probably of the seventeenth century like the mill. This formerly led from the church to the manor house, which stood on a hill to the north-west. The manor garden-walls are left, but the old house, built in Edward IV's time, and then rebuilt or

altered under Inigo Jones, was pulled down by Lord Willoughby, the heir of the Peyto family, in 1802. There is a curious terrace just below the churchyard wall on the gateway side.

The church within is plain and plastered, and though very small, was far too roomy for the tiny congregation, which met there on the Sunday morning when I took refuge in it from the melancholy tomb-stones and the blackened sky. The Te Deum was but a feeble piping, and I listened quietly to the wonderful Church prayers, and a sermon on the contrast between the Law and the Gospel, from a seat far back among the Peyto tombs, though the sight of the curves of marble and alabaster kept mingling in my mind with the words of the discourse of the preacher. Three generations of the Peyto clan are represented here on famous tombs, that have been moved to the west end from other parts of the church. Here lie Humphrey and Anna, his wife, their effigies of coloured alabaster showing some of the last efforts of the school of alabasterers of Burton-on-Trent, who did such a vast amount of work for England and Europe in the Middle Ages. It is not well done, but it is mightily interesting, and recalls the Clopton tomb at Stratford-on-Avon, also poor, late work. Humphrey Peyto lies by his wife's side, bare-headed and in armour, with his helmet for a pillow. She wears a ruff and a great hood. There is a tiny dog with a red collar at her feet, and a long chain hangs from her shoulders. Both husband and wife hold a book in their clasped hands. The diminutive figures of their ten children stand in the panel above. One is in swathing bands, since he died a child. Some are in civil dress, some in armour, and there is a great display of heraldry. The inscription tells how the bodies of Humphrey Peyto, who

deceased March 30th, 1585, and Anna, his wife, rest here, "whose souls God grant a joyful resurrection. In God is our hope."

The other tombs are, however, far finer as works of art. That of Sir William, son of Humphrey, and his wife Eleanor, is from the hand of a great English sculptor, Nicholas Stone. Stone remarks in his "Journal" he was well paid for his work for Sir Edward Peyto, with the sum of £150. The tomb is of grey and white marble with a slab of black. There is a circular niche, flanked by pilasters, and topped by a pediment with a coat of arms. In the niche are the busts of William Peyto, who died in 1609, and his wife Eleanora, daughter of Sir William Aston of Tixhall, Staffordshire, who died in 1636, standing on pedestals. His beard is cut square, and he is clad in plate armour with a broad collar. She has a draped head, a falling collar, and a face full of nobility, with full, small mouth and aquiline nose. It is certainly one of the finest tombs I have met with in journeying over the countryside.

Hardly less striking is the memorial to Sir Edward Peyto. He has a fine beardless face, and his wife, Elizabeth, is a dainty person in the charming Henrietta Maria style with curling hair, and much lace over the bust. It is noted in his epitaph that "he was most expert in good letters, chiefly mathematics," but he will best be remembered for his daring conduct at the siege of Warwick Castle, 1642, when he hoisted in defiance of the besieging Cavaliers a flag showing a Bible and winding sheet. He is a man of whom we would fain know more.

The Civil War must have been full of tragedy with its train of family discord and neighbours' hate. Says Mr. Kipling of this "patient land"—

"She should have passed in cloud and fire,
And saved us from this sin
Of war—red war—'twixt child and sire,
Household and kith and kin,
In the heart of a sleepy Midland shire,
With the harvest scarcely in."

At this time Warwickshire was torn by contending parties. The Comptons of Compton Wynyates were Cavaliers, Lord Brooke and Peyto held by the Parliament, while the Fieldings of Newnham Paddox were divided—the eldest son was with the Parliament, his father with the King. Peyto commanded the garrison at Warwick Castle in Lord Brooke's absence. The town let in Lord Northampton's men, and were confident the castle would be delivered up immediately, but Sir Edward refused to surrender. After two hours the Cavalier commander sent again, and Sir Edward replied angrily that they might have taken his word at first. His defiant signal of the Bible and winding-sheet, which must have put heart into the garrison, showed that he and his men trusted in God and did not fear death. Some of the ordnance took off a pinnacle from the old church tower where the Cavalier Comptons had fixed their cannon. The castle was relieved by Lord Brooke two months before the Battle of Edge Hill.

The Peyto family, said to come from Poitou, held land at Chesterton from the days of Edward III. They seem to have been men of brains and character, for the founders of the family were lawyers of eminence. The windows of their beautiful old house were filled, as one may see in Dugdale's "Warwickshire," with heraldic glass, and at Walsgrave-on-Sow near Coventry, also held by the Peyto family, there is some glass left in the church bearing their arms. They seem

to have taken throughout a different line from that of their neighbours and sometime foes, the Comptons, who managed to keep in favour with Henry VIII, for William Peyto—he was made a cardinal in Mary's reign—spoke against the Divorce, greatly offending Henry, and had to spend many years in exile. Edward, the Parliamentary leader, however, seems to have been the most noted of his race. The man, who employed Inigo Jones and Nicholas Stone and gave that touch of drama to his defence of Warwick Castle, must have been a man of fine and original mind.

I do not know whether the little old cottage by the church represents the site of a former vicarage, but if so, it has extraordinary associations. On the Monday after the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula in the third year of Henry V, (August, 1415) Lacy, the vicar of Chesterton, sheltered a noted fugitive, who was hiding from justice with the great price of a thousand marks upon his head. Later a pardon was granted to the vicar for receiving and harbouring Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, "knowing him to be a heretick and holding divers opinions contrary to the Catholick Faith." Oldcastle, a friend of Henry V, a leading Lollard, is one of the most remarkable English figures of the later mediæval time. He was found to be the owner of an heretical book, discovered at an illuminator's in Paternoster Row, and so unsatisfactory were his replies to his clerical judges on the questions of Transubstantiation and Confession, that he was excommunicated and handed over to the secular arm. He, however, escaped from the Tower in 1414, and for nearly four years hid in retreats such as Chesterton, but was taken after a stout resistance in a farmhouse on the Welsh Marches. So

he "was hadde," says a chronicler, "into the Tour agen, and there he was laid on a hurdil, and drawn through the cite to Saint Gyles Felde, and there was made a new paire of galows, and a strong chayne, and a coler of yron for hym, and there he was hanged and brent on the galows, and alle for his lewdeness and fals opynyons."

Oldcastle had mixed himself up with obscure political affairs, and was much hated by the gentlemen of his day, who loved battle and tournament better than theological disputes.

"It is unkindly" (unnatural) says a contemporary poet—

> "It is unkindly for a knight
> That should a kinges castle keep,
> To babble the Bible day and night
> In resting time when he should sleep:
> And carefully away to creep
> Fore all the chief of chivalry.
> Well ought him to wail and weep,
> That such lust hath in Lollardy."

It seems the fashion among historians of to-day—there is a fashion in historical opinions, as there is in those of art and politics—to speak slightingly of the Lollards, as people of small account. And yet, when we remember the fewness of their numbers, the might of the powers arrayed against them, the solitary boldness of their thought, and the trend of events then in the hidden future, they rank amongst the most remarkable men who have ever lived in England.

CHAPTER XVI

Roman Chesterton

THE history of Chesterton goes further back than the Civil War or the Lollard heresy. About half a mile west from the windmill near a little stream, a roughly rectangular earthwork lies astride the Fosse Way. Authorities used to speak doubtfully about the age of the fort's origin, but recent excavations have proved incontestably that it is Roman. In the camp itself, a tesselated pavement has been found five feet below the surface, together with much building material, and opposite the church near Ewefield Farm remains of Roman buildings have been discovered with more tesselated pavement. Evidently there has been a great camp here, and more or less settled occupation in Roman times. It is strange to think how busy and peopled these quiet fields must have been all those hundreds of years ago. A Roman camp was a marvel of organisation, with the general's tent roughly in the centre, and the four gates connected by rectangular roads. In the eyes of Josephus, a Roman camp seemed like "a city built on the sudden," with its gates and towers, its engines for throwing arrows and slinging stones, market-place, craftsmen's workshops and court of justice.

The interior of Chesterton camp occupies some eight acres, and the ditches, which the plough has made broad and shallow, measure in some places 140 feet across the top, and are nine feet to twelve feet deep.

Under the tawny curve of Windmill Hill, the "lands" show in the grass where the plough has been levelling the deep ditch the Romans made, and the sheep pasture quietly where the Roman legions were. It is billowy land, with tall timber, and a little bridge and stream lie at the camp's corner to the

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south-west. What were the people who once had possession of the camp? Were the legions folk of many nations, worshippers of Jove, "the best and greatest," Mithra, Isis and the great Mother of Phrygia? I wonder if we shall ever find the altars which have raised to the divinity of the distant

empire, or the nymphs of wood and hill, or the mother goddesses of their distant land.

When I last visited the camp, brown gipsy children in gay clothes opened the gate for us to pass along the Roman road, bordered by thistles with heads of plumy grey. By the side of the Fosse there was a gipsy encampment, and a woman with a child in her arms occupied the centre of the group. The bright-coloured garments, a bright blue pot and blue smoke from the fire, all made a delightful picture after the manner of Walker's "Vagrants." I once heard of a gipsy girl called Fuchsia, which is an absolutely right and characteristic name for a member of the human family, whose colouring is so deep and rich. The Gipsies are an ancient people, and do well to inherit the ground that the Romans, another ancient people, have worked but forsaken.

COVENTRY
Sta
To Birmingham
To Rugby
L.M.S.R.
Sow
Finham Brook
Stoneleigh
Kenilworth
Sta
Castle
Avon
Stare Bridge
Weston
Cubbington
Avon
Welsh Road
Leam
Fosse Way
G.W.R.
Sta
LEAMINGTON
Sta
WARWICK
Castle
Avon
L.M.S.R.
Whitnash
G.W.R.

CHAPTER XVII

The Avon Valley Villages

Cubbington and Abraham Murcott, "Marriner"

Cubbington.

IT was a wonderfully still November day when I went to Cubbington, over the Campion Hills. All the leaves were gone, save a few ghostly brown relics on sheltered oaks, and there was a wonderful contrast between the green of the fields, with their rising "lands" or ancient furrows, and the indescribable grey-black of the trees. Ash buds were black already with a promise of spring, but the elders in the hedge looked weird and old. The Long Compton witch, who greeted the king about to be metamorphosed into the Rollright Stones, knew the tree's mysterious qualities, when she said :—

> "Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be
> And I myself an eldern tree."

The Campion Hills were once a good hunting-ground for poachers. Of course, I speak of many years ago. Their's is an ancient calling, and needs, since Shakespeare followed it, no apology. Rabbits can best be caught on a dark and windy night by means of horizontal large-meshed nets, pegged down loosely near their feeding places. A *sine qua non* is, of course, the possession of a well-trained dog, who drives the frightened creatures into the net, where their heads are caught, and they can be instantly killed. Sixty or seventy is not an uncommon

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bag for old experienced hands. Hares can be caught without a net, sitting on the "form" in the field; this can be done, as the song says, "on a shiny night," as the hare is less alive and quick-witted than the rabbit. For partridge-catching a different kind of net is required, made of silk, and preliminary investigations must be made to find out where the coveys "jug," or rest together at night.

Tragedies have followed poaching before now, and a classic example of this befell in 1829, when nineteen persons, eleven of them under twenty years of age, were committed to Warwick Gaol for shooting and wounding a certain John Slim (a keeper, I suppose), "while endeavouring to apprehend them for destroying game." Seven of them were transported for life, and nine for fourteen years, whilst one of them was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. These were the cruel days after the Napoleonic wars.

There is far too much iron railing about the Campion Hills, which are the only heights of which Leamington can boast, and it looks as if some paths had been cut off. Lillington's grey tower stood out to the left among the bare trees, but a haze "happed" the wave-like country to the east and south, shrouding the distant view. The ploughed fields showed glorious brown against unploughed white stubble; others were glowing green with the root crop; in others, again, the brown earth was just tinged with the verdure of the young corn; each field with a character of its own. The horses in the field stood motionless, and everything seemed lazy and still, even the noontide shadows, when to the lowing of cows and the clucking of hens, I came into little red Cubbington at last.

Cubbington, which lies on the old Welsh Road, sacred to drovers, is not a show village. It has none of the smartness which belongs to those thatched and timbered places with gay gardens, which boast of a resident Sir Roger de Coverley squire, or of a great landlord with ample purse. It is owned by many small people, and there is a consequent air of freedom about it, and (to say the truth) a little squalor. Still, freedom has been praised by poets. The houses are crowded together, and the housing conditions probably reveal the imperfections of human society in this workaday world.

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The authorities are giving new names, quite unnecessarily, to Cubbington streets. Old ones suited best, such as Jacob's Lane, where there are as many steps to the houses as there were rounds in the Patriarch's ladder, and Lutterworth Lane, though why it should be called after that distant Leicestershire village is hard to guess. Eventually, if you

turn sharp to the right along the high road through Princethorpe and Rugby, you would arrive where Wycliffe's church stands, but 'tis far away. Gallows Knob, where some picturesque timbered cottages are, is now known by the euphonious term of Mount Pleasant, and can be reached at the back of the village, through the Pingle and by Lady-cum-leys pit. Mill Lane once led to the now demolished Weston Mill. Why can't people let old things, names and places, bide?

Cubbington has been selected by Selina Bunbury as the scene of her novel of "Combe Abbey," a work positively steeped in local colour, but one does not recognize any of the features of the village. The authoress appears to have been in Leamington in 1846, but I must plead ignorance to any further knowledge of her identity. Those who are deeply interested in the part Warwickshire played in the Gunpowder Plot may be able to grapple with this work of fiction, but after reading a chapter or two filled with particulars of Guy's well at Guys-cliff, and the ford at Leamington, languor overcame me, and the volume was closed. "Combe Abbey" is such a very, very far-distant echo of the resounding voice of the great Sir Walter Scott.

Cubbington church stands high and clear with a good, if not very striking, tower, and a churchyard with a quantity of small evergreens. Here lie the Parsons, whose descendants are in New York, the Boddingtons, who still own part of the village, and the Murcotts, of whom more anon. The church, which is dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady, has a solid Norman south arcade of the twelfth century, a good oak roof, a piscina at the east end of the south aisle, which looks drastically

restored, and an aumbry, piscina and beautiful sedilia on the south side of the chancel. On the north side is an arched recess, or Easter sepulchre, where the Host was placed on Good Friday, after the ceremony of the Adoration, or, as it was called in England, the "Creeping to the Cross." After the veiled Crucifix had been gradually uncovered with the words, "Behold the wood of the Cross on which hung the Salvation of the World," it was kissed by the clergy and congregation, all kneeling, and then laid in the sepulchre until Easter Day. Reading of these ceremonies, we do not marvel that drama rose from the ritual of the Church. There is a very good belfry arch, and a finely splayed one-light window with steps forming the sill. The plain font is Norman, with indentations caused by the hasp of an old lid, showing that fonts were originally locked.

But the unique thing in the church belongs to the eighteenth century, and is unmistakeable. Hanging on the north side of the chancel arch is a painted wooden escutcheon to Captain Abraham Murcott. It shows the gallant Captain standing on one side of his shield of arms, in the attitude of a supporter, with his feet in a very diminutive boat. The other supporter is Neptune, with his trident rather damaged, the lower part of his body ending in a merman's tail. On the coat of arms are carved the words: "Abra. Murcot, Marriner, 1702." The seaman's blue coat and red stockings are a triumph of the painter's art. At the top of the escutcheon there seemed to my imperfect sight to be a Cupid weeping, but I am told that this little figure holds a telescope. Below are the Royal Arms, while seaweed surrounds the ship. It is the most naive and diverting memorial I have ever seen.

As a child I remember staying in a house where there was on the stairs an immense picture of this gallant captain in a full-bottomed wig, clad—if memory serves—in blue coat and red stockings, standing against a marine background. This picture is now in the possession of the Rev. Walter Murcott, of Stottesdon, Shropshire.

The accepted version is that Captain Abraham Murcott went down in the storm off the Scilly Isles that sent Sir Cloudesley Shovel to his fate in 1702. A picturesque family tradition has it that the brave 'marriner's' ship (unnamed) was filled with gold-dust, and having brought their precious burden so near land and safety, he and his men were tempted to refill their glasses with overmuch freedom, so that they were caught unprepared by the storm. Alas! I feel none but the author of "Treasure Island" could do justice to the narrative of the last cruise of Abraham Murcott, 'marriner.'

Cubbington is an "open" village, that is to say, it has been divided up among different lords, the monks of Coventry, the St. Maurs and others. There is a tragedy connected with Henry St. Maur, of the time of Edward I. He committed a murder, and the king seized his lands. At one time the Shuckburghs, later the Greswolds, held the manor house, which was pulled down towards the end of the eighteenth century. There is a dreadful story told about one of the owners, who was no doubt a religious maniac.

"About the year 1635," says Thomas, in his edition of Dugdale, "Mr. Edward Greswold, then living here, was so deeply possessed with these two fancies, that we must not communicate with sinners, nor have any human inventions in God's service, that, to avoid the first, he shut up himself

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and children in his house, having no meat but what was put in a hole or window, suffering no man to come in and minister unto them, no, not when his children and himself lay sick in great misery, inasmuch that the justices of the peace, in consideration of his case, gave order to break open his house, when they found him very sick in his bed and two of his children dead . . . . and to avoid the other (*i.e.*, the employment of human inventions in God's service), he cut out the contexts and the titles of everything in his Bible, leaving nothing but the text itself." It is as dreadful a tale as that of Ugolino and his sons dying by starvation in the Tower of Pisa.

Very little is left of the manor buildings, but a charming summerhouse of red brick with stone quoins, now a pigeon house, which can be seen very well from the village street. In one of the sitting-room windows of the farm house, built on the site of the manor, is some heraldic glass showing the pierced mullets of the Shuckburghs, with other quarterings and scraps of Renaissance figured glass.

Camden says that the Shuckburghs have adopted the mullets from the shape of stones (I believe fossil vertebræ) found in the neighbourhood of the village from which they take their name. "Moreover, *Shugbury*, where the stones called *Astroites*, resembling little starres, are found, which the Lords of the place, surnamed thereupon *Shugbury*, have long shewed in their Coat armour."

There is one tale connected with the Shuckburghs, that has caused the family to be remembered—fame, when you come to analyse it, being nothing but a series of easily transmitted tales. When Charles I marched to Edgcott, before the Battle of Edge Hill, he saw one of Sir Richard Shuckburgh's sons

going a-hunting "with a very good pack of hounds; upon which it is reported that he fetched a deep sigh, and asked who that gentleman was that hunted so merrily that morning, when he was going to fight for his Crown and dignity, and, being told it was this Sir Richard Shuckburgh, he was ordered to be called to him, and was by him very graciously received." The youth returned home, armed all his tenants, and took them to fight at Edge Hill field.

Opposite the Manor-house is the Cottage, partly eighteenth century stone, and partly gabled timber of Tudor times, in a charming garden. Probably the old Tudor part consisted of a hall open to the roof, but it must have been ceiled over later, and the bedrooms, which have large timbers, added. At the coming of the present occupants to the house, the bedrooms led one into the other in the old style, without the intervention of a passage. There is also a large stone house in the village, which still belongs to the Boddingtons.

The vicars of Cubbington include two people of note; one George Huddesford, D.D., was President of Trinity College, Oxford, from 1730 to 1766; readers of Boswell's "Johnson" will be familiar with his name, as he was Vice-Chancellor of the university in the year when Dr. Johnson took his M.A. degree. Huddesford was the father of a rather remarkable son, who had artistic proclivities, and was a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom he sat as one of the models for the beautiful "Portrait of Two Gentlemen," painted in 1788, now in the National Gallery. Huddesford is the figure in the dark dress on the left-hand side. He afterwards became vicar of Loxley, and his epitaph in that church credits him with all the virtues. He was likewise a poet of sorts, and his satiric verses on the

American War, which liken the colonies to a pig, and the English government to a pig-killer, seem to show sympathy with the side opposed to England.

Another Cubbington parson, according to the history of the village by the late Vicar, was the Rev. James Austen, the brother of the immortal Jane, but of this fact I can find nothing in "Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters," by the Austen-Leighs. James was born in 1765, and he died two years after his sister in 1819. He was his father's curate and had some literary aspirations. He is said to have had a share in forming his sister's literary taste.

CHAPTER XVIII

Weston and Mary, Queen of Scots

THE oaks were keeping their bronzed leaves when I went to Weston in late October, but the delicate black lime branches stood out bare against the sky, despoiled of their leaves by the cruel winds of the previous week, and though the elms preserved their massy outlines, the twisted boughs showed more clearly than in the summer time. The aspens threw their quivering yellowness against the pearly gray of the sky, for the clouds were heavy with coming rain, and the softly moving willows were silver still. The brown of the "middle of England" oak was tinged with rose, but looked strong enough to last—like Weston tower—a thousand years. Gone were the flowers, save white nettle and yarrow and hawkweed, but what matter, when the hedges and trees are burnished gold ?

Lillington church tower stands well, but the exotic marble monuments have townified the churchyard, so that you do not linger to look more. If people would only choose the quiet grey-green stone for the record of their dead ! The registers of Lillington date from 1538. One entry tells that an old nun died here after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but whether from Wroxall nunnery, Nuneaton, Henwood, Pinley or Polesworth, who can tell ? I wonder if she welcomed the change that brought her back into the world, or whether she would have liked to end her days in cloister quiet.

By far the pleasantest way round to Weston is by the Bubbenhall road. Go, if you will, to the turn to the right beyond Waverley wood, where there is a floor of bluebells in spring, or turn at the little bridge before the wood is reached. It is a road that keeps—wherefore I know not—some old

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enchantment, and the view from the first hill looking towards the Coventry spires shows the Avon valley country in all its quiet beauty at its characteristic best. There is a farm in the valley I should like for my own; it is tight and red, with friendly corn-ricks by, and a lichen-grown barn roof, and in

front a field with a purple root-crop, pleasanter on the whole to look at than the farmhouse at the hill-top, which has, however, holm-oaks at the gate.

We have come such a little way, and Cubbington and Weston lie over to the right hand.

Beyond Cubbington, along a charming wooded road, is Weston, picturesque and scattered, a village just of the Avon Valley type of timber and brick. The Hall lies on the right hand, replacing the turretted manor house built by Sir Edward Belknap in Henry VIII's time, and "one of the fairest structures in timber," which Dugdale had ever seen. It was burned down in the beginning of the nineteenth century, but a picture of it survives in the Birmingham Library. Sir Edward Belknap fought at Stoke and at Blackheath against the Western rebels, and deserved so well of the king that he obtained pardon, as we have seen, for depopulating Burton Dassett. In later times the house was inhabited by Sir Edward Saunders, Recorder of Coventry and Chief Baron of the Exchequer. He was brother to Laurence Saunders, the Marian martyr, who was burned at Coventry, and going with the tide, the astute lawyer endeavoured to persuade his brother to change his opinions concerning the matter of the "comfortable Sacrament." Edward continued to prosper under Queen Mary, whose goodwill he had gained by persuading the Mayor of Coventry to proclaim her as queen instead, as Northumberland's order was, of Lady Jane Grey. Saunders was indirectly connected with another unfortunate queen, Mary of Scots, a prisoner in Coventry from November 25, 1569, till January 2, 1570. The Queen of Scots had been brought to Coventry from Tutbury in great haste, on the

outbreak of rebellion in the North, and Shrewsbury and Huntingdon found the utmost difficulty in deciding where to lodge her and her numerous retinue, and how to keep her from "practice," *i.e.*, plotting with any of her followers. It was at length decided to take her to a house formerly

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belonging to Saunders,* I suppose the one he had held by the tower, between the Grey Friars' and the Bablake Gates.

On December 4, 1569, the lords informed Cecil, Queen

* *Hatfield Papers* (Hist. MSS. Com.) 1. 448, 455. This house has not before been identified.

Elizabeth's minister, that they had brought the Queen of Scots to a house, which was "sometime the Lord Chief Baron's, although," they add, "to be long will not be convenient, for the house is so strait of room."

There are countless legends about Mary's sojourn at Coventry, and everyone is shown the little stone room with the ventilator in the tower of St. Mary Hall, where tradition has it that she was lodged during her confinement in this city. What documentary evidence there is for connecting this "Queen Mary's chamber," or, indeed, St. Mary Hall, with the unhappy wanderer, I have never been able to discover, but certainly her captors took her to the "Bull" inn in Smithford Street—the site is now occupied by the Barracks—and to Saunders' house.

The little church in Weston village with a fine upstanding tower is of various periods, has no great architectural interest. The font has some curious heads. A very little old stained glass may be discovered, and it is noticeable that portions of the tracery of the east window of the north aisle remain in the arched opening leading to a later built chantry chapel on the north side of the chancel. On the east wall of the chapel is Sir Edward Saunders' tomb, somewhat disfigured by Puritan iconoclasm, but enough remains of the carving to show its fine work. One may see the figure of the Chief Baron of the Exchequer kneeling before a *prie-dieu*, with a flowing cloak that was once coloured scarlet. Above are carved representations of the Resurrection and Ascension, and in the carving of the latter subject one can distinguish the impression left by Christ's feet upon the mountain-top. Another friend of Saunders, the physician Joyce Tomer, is also buried in the

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church. Sir Edward died in 1576. A brass plate by the side of his monument records the merits of his wife Margery :—

> Here Marjerie Saunders lyeth, whose mortall lymns are dede,
> But to enjoy immortal rest her soul to Heaven is fled.
> Whyles lyf did last she was a paterne of good lyfe,
> Devout to God, good to the poore, a chast and perfit wyfe.
> A housewyfe of great skill, setting her whole delight
> In her just love and wedded make, Sir Edward Saunders, Knight.
> For Christ his crosse she calid ammidis the pangis of Death,
> Which she with mind and ie beheld until her later breath.
> And so gave up her gost to God, which lyf did lend,
> Who for her good, and worthily, gave her a happy end.

As I came home in the twilight, the peewits were uttering their melancholy wail in the fields by Lillington. Then all the ways were darkened.

WESTON

CHAPTER XIX

Stoneleigh and Trivial Reminiscences

MANY roads go to Stoneleigh, which was of great importance in the old times, a king's manor and a centre of justice. Take by preference the straight way to the right from the Kenilworth Road hard by Leamington, which leads past the Abbey and under the ancient oaks of the Park, and set off in the forenoon to see the play of light and shadow on the cut-waters of Stare Bridge. The Stoneleigh monks built this over the Avon in the fourteenth century: there are zigzag recesses for the travellers' safety, and its stones are red and green and powdered with lichen, while, surely, though other bridges span wider rivers, this is the most beautiful bridge in the whole world. The curving road brings you almost suddenly upon its lights and shadows, and if the Fates are kind, you may see the deer with their brown coats and white undersides standing near the stream. Listen, and you can hear the Avon gently lapping against the stones.

There are hardly any fish in the Avon now. Time was when eels, those marvellous creatures which go over land and water and spawn in the depths of the Atlantic, abounded in midland streams. At Guys-cliff mill they caught them by the hundredweight, almost by the ton, but times are changed, and the water that runs from the surface of our tarred roads spells destruction to fish. Whether this shortage of food supply has tended to diminish the number of otters, I know not. Sportsmen hunt them still in the upper reaches

of the Leam and Avon ; lower than Stoneleigh Abbey the Avon becomes too wide and deep ; for otters dive down so low and stay so long in deep waters that the hunters lose sight of the chain of bubbles on the surface marking their rising breath. Otter hunting is a cruel sport, for the strong, brave fighters are an unconscionable time in dying.

On the left hand just before the bridge, Stoneleigh Abbey can be seen in the distance. There is Norman building left, but the only part visible from the road is of the eighteenth century. The front has an array of windows which recalls Rosings Park in " Pride and Prejudice," and the sum " the glazing of the windows cost Sir Lewis de Burgh." Was Stoneleigh the original of any of the country houses in the matchless novels ? Jane Austen, whose mother was a Leigh, stayed here in August, 1806. Just at this date the Stoneleigh property passed from the descendants of the elder branch of the Leigh family to the younger branch. The Austens happened to be staying at Addlestrop with the Rev. Thomas Leigh, when he, as the eldest representative of that side of the family, moved from his Gloucestershire home to take possession. His guests and relatives, the Austens, accompanied the family on the journey from Addlestrop, and there is an amusing letter from Jane's mother, Mrs. Austen, a lady who could also wield the pen, referring to the visit. She describes the party as eating fish, venison and all manner of good things, in a noble parlour hung round with family portraits. " At nine in the morning," Mrs. Austen says, " we say our prayers in a handsome chapel, of which the pulpit, etc., is now hung in black. Then follows breakfast, consisting of chocolate, coffee and tea, plum cake, pound cake, hot rolls,

STARE BRIDGE, STONELEIGH

STONELEIGH ABBEY

cold rolls, bread and butter, and dry toast for me. The house steward, a fine, large, respectable-looking man, orders all these matters..... We walk a good deal, for the woods are impenetrable to the sun, even in the middle of an August day." The society of another guest, Lady Say & Sele, fatigued Mrs. Austen sadly, but this excellent and garrulous lady—inimitably drawn in Fanny Burney's "Diary"—afforded Jane many a hearty laugh.

The abbey was formerly a Cistercian monastery, the land being given by Henry II in 1154 to the Order, in exchange for their former possessions near Cannock, and the gate-house and some fragments of the old monastery are left. Some of the old abbey writings, too, remain, notably the Ledger-book of Abbot Thomas de Pipe, a man of undoubted parts, though hardly of that austerity of life consonant with a follower of St. Bernard. The publication of this book by the Dugdale Society will make Stoneleigh one of the classic villages of feudal times for the historical writer. The Cistercians were great pasture farmers and salesmen of wool.

The manorial customs of old Stoneleigh dated from the time when the land of the village belonged directly to the king, who, before the Conquest, had a house at Cryfield in this parish, where later dwelt a foreign earl, "who was a great robber." The harvest customs have great interest. At the "bede-ripe," or general reaping, the sokeman, who were higher in status than the labouring unfree villein or serf, "should all come upon request or notice with every of their tenants; the Sokemen to ride up and down on horseback, with wands, to see that they work't well, and to amerce (fine) those in the Court there and then held, that made default or laboured idly.

"That they should be in the fields at sunrising," the record continues, "and work till sunset, not sitting down to breakfast, but each one of them eating what he brought with him, as they went up and down the lands to their work; and after breakfast to sit down once before dinner, the Lord finding them drink; but at noon, both they and the Sokemen to have meat and drink provided by the Lord."

"That the reapers should eat by themselves, every one having a little Wheat-loaf, four eggs and potage, *viz.*, Grewell (gruel) without flesh boyled in it, except the Lord would afford them other, with Cheese and Beer sufficient; and after dinner one sitting down with bread and beer, but the Sokemen themselves to be served with better dyet, according to their degrees." Certain of the serfs of the manor, in addition to ploughing and reaping, made the gallows and hanged thieves, "everyone of which Bondmen," says the record, "was to wear a red clout betwixt his shoulders, upon his upper garment."

On the left hand, just before the descent into Stoneleigh, is Motslow Hill, where the king's, or later the abbot's, tenants met to hold their moot or court. From this hill in the field on the left hand there is a beautiful view of the little red church and village with the timbered manor-house and small white thatched cottages by the wooden bridge over the river, looking as if made by Nature, and not a piece of the work of man. In winter all this is well seen through the leafless branches, and there is only one little blot on the landscape, the number of white marble tombstones that have been lately raised in the churchyard. Marble is foreign to the English landscape, and never becomes part of the surrounding

green like the native stone. Poplars skirt the edge of the river Sow at the hill's foot; a modern bridge spans the stream and the place, red and cosy, greets the passer-by. The cottages look very much the same as they did when I was a child. There are no more and no fewer of them, and they seem tight and well-repaired. Stoneleigh is mainly built of brick and timber, but the almshouses, raised in 1592 are of stone. The village was denuded of trees in the great storm of the nineties, thereby losing some of its picturesqueness, but nothing has marred the beauty of the timbered manor-house with three gables at the far side of the village. It used to be covered with ivy, but now the black timbers stand revealed. Inside (so the Fates be kindly) you may see a fine oak-panelled room, while another sitting-room has a chimney-place and inglenook big enough to house all the children of the woman who lived in a shoe. Why it is called the manor house I do not know. The only lords of the manor of Stoneleigh have been the king, the abbot and monks and—with a short interregnum after the Dissolution—the Leigh family. Perhaps it was the house of some steward in ancient days.

How well I remember the place in childhood, and the lady who was mistress thereof, with her nondescript-coloured "front," her face a network of wrinkles bordered by a round cap with mauve ribbons, her incredibly aged hands folded over a black silk apron. She kept pink and white sugar biscuits ready for visitors in a cupboard by the inglenook, and eked out, they just served to lighten a little the tedium of the interminable talk, so void of rational interest, which engaged the grown-ups. How immeasureable to a child is the length of an hour's conversation about neighbours and

STONELEIGH

servants and cookery! It seems to stretch out to the crack of Doom.

Long, long, too, was the service in the familiar church to the mite in the family pew. There were so very few people to look at, and their backs and a few side faces were so well known. Long, long, long was the Litany; endless the alternate reading of the Psalms, to a child of infelicitous vacuity of mind, and none of Charles Lamb's infantile devoutness. After the momentary thrill occasioned by the sight of the tall fine old gentleman—Sir Roger de Coverley to the life—who said his private devotions into his hat, the service, save for the clerk's all too forcible "Amens," relapsed into monotony.

We were a genteel congregation, though I do not know which family was the more genteel, the household with the rather pale, stern-looking mother, who won her future husband's esteem and obtained the offer of his hand by boning seventy sparrows for a pie, or the two tall sisters with exuberant figures and social aspirations, whose father..... but a truce to these foolish stories. After the service (why, I know not) the most genteel of the congregation sat on, and it was sometimes a struggle to ascertain who could show the greatest gentility by sitting longest. I remember the palm was usually carried off by the lady with the sparrow-pie training in patience.

The church is a mixture of Norman and fourteenth century work. There are gallery and pews of the Georgian period. In my time, at evening Lenten services a few candles made darkness visible, but all beyond the Norman chancel arch was black as night. The chancel arch is, I think, probably the finest that the shire contains. There are zigzag, double cone and

billet mouldings, and on the jambs are carved strange beasts, one a serpent and another some sort of draconian monster. In the chancel may be found more Norman work, and a fourteenth century effigy of a priest in alb and chasuble, but for the maniple you look in vain. A very large monument of black and white marble, said to be by Nicholas Stone, commemorates Duchess Dudley, whose husband Robert, son of Elizabeth's Leicester, unable to prove his legitimacy, was cheated out of his inheritance in the reign of James I. He left his wife and eloped with Elizabeth Southwell, who was disguised as a page. The couple lived in Italy, Dudley being known under the title, granted to him by the Emperor, of Duke of Northumberland. A many-sided scientific genius, he was the author of a work on navigation, and his portraits bear a likeness, it is said, to those of the poet, Shelley. He died in Florence, 1649. His wife, Alice, created by Charles I Duchess Dudley, in her own right, was the daughter of Sir Thomas Leigh and Catherine, daughter of Sir John Spencer of Wormleighton, a lady whose sisters were immortalised by the poet Spenser. The duchess died in extreme old age in 1668, and made many bequests to charity. It used to be the rule that her name should be spoken of by the clergyman in the Whitsunday sermon, for the preaching of which he received a fee. A long time ago one of the vicars, the Rev. Vaughan Thomas, who had a position in Oxford, used to come year by year to take duty upon that day and pocket the fee, although in the opinion of his congregation his curate, a man with a large family, could have equally well performed the office. Mr. Thomas invariably gratified the villagers by using the Johnsonian word "eleemosynary" in his discourse.

Another learned man connected with the village, probably the son of the then vicar, was Thomas Drax, D.D., an Elizabethan divine. He is mentioned by Fuller as one of the worthies of this shire, and is said to have "translated into Latin all the works of Mr. Perkins," another Warwickshire

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worthy, who waged theological war with a third local notable, the Roman Catholic Bishop, with whom we became acquainted at Brailes. As Mr. Perkins' works are so many that "an enumeration of them fills eight columns of the 'Athenæ

Cantabrigienses,'" it is hardly possible (human frailty being remembered) that Mr. Drax turned all this voluminousness into Cicero's ancient tongue. Even then.....

Ah! Mr. Drax, Mr. Drax, Mr. Drax! My eyes burn and my limbs ache in sympathy as I watch thee at thy unending task, illumined by the midnight lamp. Was it for this thou didst

"Shun delights and live laborious days?"

Men have forgotten thee, and dust lies thick upon Genevan tomes. Ah! Mr. Drax, Mr. Drax, Mr. Drax! So we toil, and oblivion covers us at the last.

The splendid font, which came originally from Maxstoke, is Norman work of the twelfth century, and shows the figures of the twelve Apostles under an arcade. Alternating with this is another arcade above with a row of masks. The apostles—save St. Peter—have no emblems, but some of them carry a book or a scroll.

The exterior of the church is not very remarkable, save for the typanum of the north door, which is covered with dragons and chimerae, and is one of the finest specimens of Norman work in the shire. It is blocked up, as is often the case; nevertheless the evil spirits expelled at baptism were held to escape by this door. Close to is a pathetic monument of the fourteenth century, washed and worn away by the rain and frost of the long years, but not too worn for us to perceive the figure of a woman in a large headdress with a child lying on her right hand. The story went that a lady, wife of a knight, who lived on Motslow Hill, was so grieved at the news of her husband's death in the wars, that she destroyed herself and

STONELEIGH CHURCH

her unborn child. There is probably some foundation for the tale, since the figure lies on the north side of the churchyard, anciently the place of burial for such as died by their own hands.

Stoneleigh church is for me peopled with the absent and the dead. Recollection fills the great pews with folk who have departed by journeys long or short, but my own have gone the longest journey of all. The change in everything else is so little, I could fancy them back. But to all human love comes at length the unescapable end.

CHAPTER XX

Town and Country in the Avon Valley

Warwick

WARWICK stands on its rock, quiet and feudal, with two church-crowned gates, one at each end of a little street, a timbered hospital, once the hall of the guild of the Holy Trinity and St. George, classic houses at street corners built after the fire of 1694, and far, far too much history behind it to be compressed into a small space. It is full of scenes the artist has made over-familiar, like Mill Street, or the view of the Castle from the bridge, and Leycester Hospital, where the old almsmen sit quiet in the sun. Comparatively neglected is Northgate Street, wonderful in the afternoon lights and shadows with Saunderson Miller's classic Shire-hall, and Bridge End, a glory of red roofs, on the far side of the river. For ourselves, we can only hear the bells of St. Mary's chime, and think of the fortunes of some of the dead earls who lie buried there in the church on the hill.

There have been Earls of Warwick since—well, it is almost impossible to say how long ago, according to Dugdale, who besides being a great scholar was an adorable teller of tales. Gwayr, he says, cousin "in the Third Degree" (to be precise) of the renowned King Arthur, built Warwick, and Arthgal,

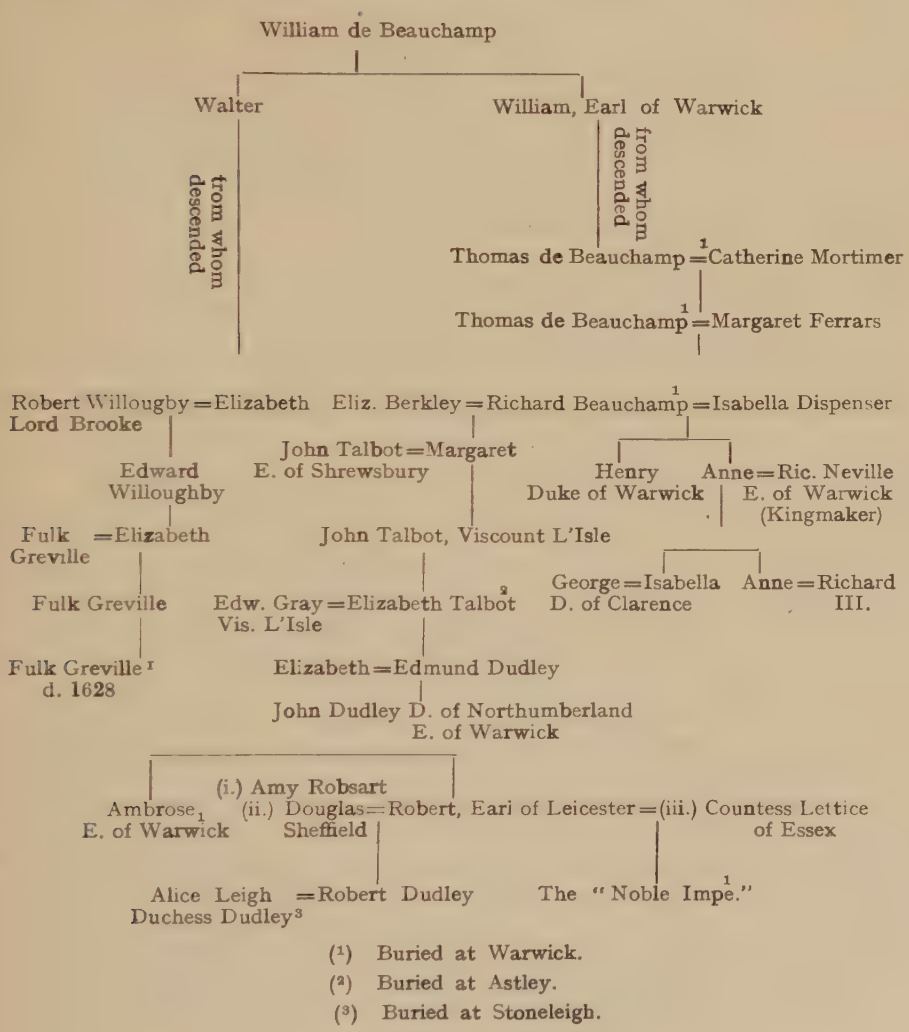
first earl, was a contemporary knight of the Round Table. The famous badge of the bear and ragged staff is of almost equal antiquity, the bear being adopted as an "Ensign" by Arthgal from a resemblance of the word for that animal (in the British language, of course) and his own name. As for the ragged staff, that was adopted in honour of Morvidus, who slew a giant in a duel, "which Gyant encountered him with a young Tree, pull'd up by the root, the boughs being snag'd from it," a combat which sounds as if it had happened a very long time ago.

But romance apart, there have been Earls of Warwick from the time of Henry de Newburgh, who bore that title in the Conqueror's day, and it has come down through the female line to the Grevilles who bear it now, and who are also descended (they say) from the Saxon possessors of Warwick, ancestors of the Arden family, whom we shall meet at Aston, near Birmingham. It is to the Grevilles, who came in under James I, that we owe the building of most of the habitable castle, as we know it now. Nevertheless, the two towers of the dominating, ancient, castellated portion called after Caesar and Guy, we owe to two fourteenth century earls, both named Thomas de Beauchamp, the first a great fighter in the French wars.

The pedigree shows the descent of the Beauchamp earls to Earl Richard, the Dudley earls, who counted the Beauchamps as ancestors through the Greys and Talbots, descendants of Earl Richard by his first wife, and the Greville earls, who are connected with Alcester, which we do not touch on, and with Idlicote. The line branches off very early in the history of the family.

BRIDGE END

Pedigree of the Beauchamps, Dudleys and Grevilles.



(1) Buried at Warwick.

(2) Buried at Astley.

(3) Buried at Stoneleigh.

Whoever starts from the four crossways to the church on Saturday at noon will hear the bells chime from the great eighteenth century tower to the tune of "Ye Warwickshire lads and lasses," the official local anthem, written by Garrick for the 1767 Stratford Jubilee, with the music by Arne. As a "made" song, it has not the vogue of a traditional air, nor have Warwickshire folk quite the overweening pride in their county that belongs to Yorkshiremen or Devonians. Still it rings out with a merry tune.

"Ye Warwickshire lads, and ye lasses,
See what at our jubilee passes,
Come revel away, rejoice, and be glad,
For the lad of all lads was a Warwickshire lad.
Warwickshire lad,
All be glad,
For the lad of all lads was a Warwickshire lad."...

"But to rare Warwickshire all must submit
For the wit of all wits was a Warwickshire wit."...

"There never was seen such a creature,
Of all she was worth he robbed Nature;
He took all her smiles, and he took all her grief,
And the thief of all thieves was a Warwickshire thief,
Warwickshire thief,
He's the chief,
For the thief of all thieves was a Warwickshire thief."

The church is of two periods, mediæval Gothic and Gothic tempered to the taste of the time of Queen Anne, for the old nave was destroyed by the great fire of 1694. The contrast between the two styles is by no means unhappy, and the acoustic properties of the church are beyond praise. It is even cathedral-like in its spacious loftiness with the view of the fine east window of the choir that Thomas Beauchamp

founded in the fourteenth century. South Warwickshire would have liked well to have had Warwick for the new cathedral, but tradition turned the scale in favour of St. Michael's, Coventry.

The flags droop raggedly from the walls, and the gold gleams dully on the funeral hatchments of earls dead and gone. In the chancel lies Thomas Beauchamp, who fought at Poitiers, and in the Beauchamp chapel lies his grandson, Richard, governor of Henry VI, adversary of the Maid of Orleans, under a tomb of rare splendour, made of "latten," or gilt bronze, and Purbeck marble. Latten was at one time a metal in common use, hence the point of Shakespeare's—probably apocryphal—jest, when he stood sponsor to a child of the learned Ben Jonson. "I will give my godson a Latin spoon," he said, "and thou, Ben, shalt translate it."

Somewhat stiff and ungainly we may think the founder's chancel tomb. The alabasterers of the fifteenth century were better artists than those of the fourteenth, yet the tomb has the attraction of coming from a great age, that of Chaucer and the Black Prince. The carver has shown the earl clad in armour of mixed mail and plate with the jupon, or short surcoat, charged with the famous Beauchamp arms, to be met with everywhere in the shire, gules, a fesse between six cross-crosslets, or, and I have never seen a detail of armour more precisely rendered in carving than the fastening of the tippet of mail (camail) to the helmet, or bascinet. The warrior's ungauntletted hand holds that of his wife, who wears a reticulated head-dress and tightly buttoned sleeves, her feet resting against a lamb. Her lord's rest against an unmuzzled bear. Husband and wife both died in the year 1369.

The tomb of their son, another Thomas, who played a somewhat ignoble part in the reign of Richard II, was destroyed by the fire, but the rescued brass has been placed by the Beauchamp chapel door. The younger Thomas built Guy's Tower in the castle and continued his father's work in the church. His wife, a Ferrers of Groby, is shown on the brass by his side. At her feet is a little dog with a collar of bells.

The Beauchamp chapel, where lies Thomas's son Richard, is one of the most complete and wonderful of the mediæval chantry chapels left in England. All the thought and devotion and art of the time are brought into this small space. The figure of the founder, cast in gilt bronze, lies on a tomb of Purbeck marble in the centre of the chapel. The effigy is, as it were, clad in complete plate-armour of Milan steel with a pauldron or high guard on the left shoulder, with plate and band and strap and buckle rendered with perfect skill. The bare head rests on a tilting helm with a swan for crest, the raised hands are held apart, and at the feet are the muzzled bear, the Warwick badge, and a magnificent griffin in honour of the Despensers, the family of the earl's second wife. Round the tomb in niches are little latten figures of mourners, belonging to the earl's family, their identity revealed by enamelled shields, and above them are angels holding small scrolls with a legend, "Sit Deo laus et gloria, defunctis misericordia," or, "Praise and glory be to God, mercy to the dead." Above the effigy is the framework of a hearse, a vehicle for holding funeral candles, but the pall that covered it is long gone. Round the tomb are two narrow plates with a long inscription in quaint English interspersed with bears and ragged staves: "Prayeth devoutly for the soul, whom God assoil (absolve),

of one of the most worshipful knights in his days of manhood and conning (knowledge), Richard Beauchamp, late Earl of Warwick....whose body resteth here under this tomb in a full fair vault of stone set on the bare rock, the which visited with

RICHARD BEAUCHAMP

long sickness in the castle of Rouen, therein deceased full 'christenly' the last day of April, the year of our Lord God MCCCCXXXIX (1439), he being at that time Lieutenant general and governor of the realm of France....."

According to a contract, the whole tomb was wrought by John Essex, marbler, and other English artists, while Bartholomew Lambespring, Dutchman and goldsmith, did the engraving and polishing. It is one of the glories of England.

Oh! for space and time to tell of the glass of which the wreckage is still so brilliant and quaint and lovely. Gone, save for part of the kneeling figure of the earl with a woman's head, are the figures of the family of the founder. Gone, save for insignificant fragments, the figures of the nine prophets in the side windows with their appropriate Messianic texts. The east window is in sad confusion; but the earl's patron saints are there, all English ones, St. Alban in armour, St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. John of Bridlington and St. Winifred of Shrewsbury, with fragments of prophetic figures, and of scenes from the life of the Virgin and Christ's Passion. One can still see the Head crowned with thorns.

In the upper lights are little ribboned scrolls "of the marriage" of the earl, more properly the motto of his wealthy countess, who came from the Despenser clan. "Louez Spenser,"—praise ye Spenser, the Countess seems to say. "Tant que vyvray," "so long as I shall live," responds the Earl. The whole is besprinkled with the Warwick badge of the bear and ragged staff, for even saints and angels have respect to the nobility of human blood.

Most charming of all are the upper lights of the side windows, where a heavenly orchestra, angels brown-feathered, angels with heads and faces glowing red against a blue background dotted with discs of gold, play on fiddles and viols and harps and dulcimers to the voices of a heavenly choir.

These last sing antiphons in the Virgin's praise from scrolls covered with plainsong notes of music. Such beauty as this could only be conceived and executed when artists had not outgrown the child's outlook and the child's joy.*

BEAR AND GRIFFIN, BEAUCHAMP CHAPEL

Richard Beauchamp was one of the heroes of mediæval chivalry. What Bayard was to France, Earl Richard was to England. He was a paladin—with great possessions. He travelled, he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and he fought whenever occasion offered, thus at Constance in 1414 he slew "a great duke," who had sent him a challenge "for

* *Archæologia*, Vol. lxi, p. 583.

his lady's sake." Lately there has been found a house-steward's manuscript account-book showing the people present at Earl Richard's table, and the provision of meals for them in France and England. I hear that it has been copied. If printed, it would be a useful storehouse of learning of the domesticities of this country in the Middle Ages.

The great estates accumulated by the Beauchamp family came into feeble hands sometime after Earl Richard's death. His daughter, widow of the Kingmaker, was despoiled by her two unnatural sons-in-law, the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, who were allowed by act of Parliament to treat her as if she were "naturally dead." Her two daughters, Anne, Queen of Richard III, and Isabel, Duchess of Clarence, died before their mother, and an unhappy grandson, last of the earls of the old line, was executed by order of Henry VII.

The other tombs in the chapel belong to a later age. They commemorate the Dudleys, who, though they could trace descent through their grandmother from the Astleys and Beauchamps, were regarded as *parvenus* by the older families of the shire. Elizabeth's Leicester and his third wife Lettice, Countess of Essex, clothed in grand Elizabethan dress, lie on an ornate tomb, with a great display of heraldry, the cinque-foil and the ragged staff. He died in 1588 and his long-lived wife in 1634. The effigy of the earl clad in rich armour with the garter on his left knee resembles his well-known features. His sumptuous funeral cost £4,000. By the tomb hangs a wooden tablet with verses in Countess Lettice's praise.

Elizabeth's known fondness has given Leicester an importance he might have otherwise lacked. The man seems to

have been essentially ignoble; his very magnificence borders on vulgarity. As a neighbour he was greedy and tyrannical. "A man," it was said, "was oppressed if he complied with him, and undone if he opposed him," and though Elizabeth's insane jealousy may have been to some extent responsible for his worst matrimonial tangles, yet he was ruthless even beyond the wont of husbands of unwanted wives. Douglas Sheffield, mother of his son, Robert, averred that to rid himself of her he attempted poison, but there will always be a doubt whether he really contrived the death of Amy Robsart. If her death came about by design the scheme was but inartistically carried out and defeated its end by raising a clamour which daunted Elizabeth. It should be remembered, however, that Leicester in the lordly Elizabethan way patronized letters, and though he never shone as a man of affairs or of war, he cannot have been destitute of ability, coming as he did of a stock that produced brilliant men, like Sir Philip Sydney and his own son Robert. Elizabeth, too, who was no fool, loved him well, but.....

The other Dudley effigies show Ambrose, Leicester's brother, lying on a plaited rush mattress, and the pathetic little figure of the "noble Impe," Leicester's and Lettice's only child, whose tomb is against the south wall. Fulk Greville of the new line of Warwick Castle tenants has another resting place. He lies buried in the chapter-house, the brief but proud inscription on his tomb recording that he was servant to Queen Elizabeth, councillor to King James, and friend to Sir Philip Sidney. With this ends the great list of Warwick monuments. Probably no other parish church in the country possesses such a series of memorials to well-known names.

At nearly all seasons of the year Warwick is sedate and quiet, but it puts off its lethargy on the Saturday after old Michaelmas Day at the Statute or old hiring-fair, *tout court*, the Mop. Then everything is garish and noisy, there is a chatter of cheap-jacks whose glibness must be the despair of budding politicians, for verily it is a great sharpener of the intellect to live by one's wits, and horror! oxen are roasted whole. But for the children the whole leads up to the glory of the gilded roundabouts, where dragons and Derby winners revolve to the strident strains of internal music. I cannot but think that the glory of the Mop has somewhat departed. These are lean years. There seemed, when I saw it, too many shows for the people. Horses on world-famous roundabouts were revolving riderless, while laddies unprovided with pence gazed on them with wistful eyes. In the week following the Mop, one frequently saw brightly coloured caravans threading the country lanes. The hibernation of the gipsy and showman is a question which needs to be investigated. One explanation I once heard from a servant, who gave it as her opinion that gipsies lived in the earth like rabbits in winter-time. It may be. As a corrective after the noise and colour of the fair, it is good to go down Mill Street to see how Caesar's Tower stands out above the yew trees, and listen to the steady roar of the waters as they fall down by the old mill. Fortune favoured me that evening, when I went thither for quiet, for before I came to the bridge the new moon rose over the trees.

CHAPTER XXI

Leamington, Guys-Cliff and Kenilworth

Leamington and Kenilworth

THE best centre for sight-seeing in Warwickshire is undoubtedly Leamington, a gentle back-water of a place, where people with not very much to do and not very much to spend pass a cosy, church-going existence. The town has its beauties, particularly in spring-time, when all the flowering shrubs put on a bridal dress, but since it is a valley place and enervating, and the life there artificial, it is best not to bring youth thither. The young will feel their energies pent up as in a cage. When they have taken long flights and come back, they will be able to enjoy its charm. Those who have become acclimatized maintain that Leamington is as pretty a place as any the British Isles contain, except unapproachable Bath. The streets and squares have a pleasant amplitude, so that the thoroughfares of other watering-places seem relatively cramped and small. Compared with more modern pleasure towns, there is a fine restraint about Leamington architecture, though builders have marred the Parade here and there by some modern Gothic, which is quite out of place. Unfortunately the poor live in little courts and shut-off alleys that you hardly note in passing, and these have been the despair of one or two parsons of the more energetic type. No one has described the place so well as Hawthorne in "Our Old Home." The author of "Transformation" stayed at 10 Lansdowne Circus

in 1856, and in essentials Leamington is the same as when he saw it even after a lapse of seventy years. The other lion of the town is Dickens, who brings Mr. Dombey and Major Bagstock to Leamington in "Dombey and Son." Probably those impossibly theatrical persons, Mr. Carker and Edith Granger, first met one another in the Holly Walk.

There are pleasant places within a few miles of Leamington, such as Ashow, a beautiful little village by the Avon, where there is a churchyard cross. Nor should we leave the village without a tribute to the memory of Thomas Allestree, some time rector there, who composed and printed some consolatory discourses, under the felicitous title of 'A Funeral Handkerchief,' and whose gratitude to his patron irresistibly recalls Mr. Collins in 'Pride and Prejudice.' At Guys-cliff also within a walk is a mill with a balcony, erroneously called the Saxon mill, and the Avon makes a foaming waterfall with its brown waters, which rush down with a pleasant sound. The house and grounds are private property, but those who have permission to enter can see a curious hermitage in the rock, said to be as old as Saxon times, and an uncouth stone figure cut to commemorate the fall of a quarryman. John Rous, the antiquary, a "voice crying in the wilderness" at the time of the depopulation of the villages in the fifteenth century, was chantry priest at Guys-cliff.

Everyone goes to Kenilworth, which in my young days was, like Cranford, in the hands of the Amazons, widows and spinsters, but is now a flourishing little town and a haunt of business men. As I remember it, district-visiting occupied the working hours of the ladies, while relaxation was afforded by prolonged discussions, which only heart-stirring events,

GUY'S-CLIFF

ASHOW

like a royal marriage, could divert from local topics, such as the curate's ill-advised attentions to some young lady, whose connections were engaged in retail trade; but we live now under George V and in a changed world.

An energetic committee is engaged in excavating the ruins of the Abbey, which was one of the most splendid and largely

endowed of the monastic houses of the Midlands, and they have found there very fine specimens of tiles, now placed just inside the church, and much masonry of the late Norman period. The Kenilworth canons were famous architects. Have we not seen as far away as Fenny Compton fourteenth century window tracery of Kenilworth stone? The churches, too, of which they held the appropriation, such as Stoneleigh in this county, Iffley in Oxfordshire and Stewkley in Buckinghamshire, show that they must have employed some very talented master-mason in late Norman times.

A fine specimen of their work, a Norman door, decorated with embattled and beak-headed mouldings, executed in the friable local sandstone, is to be seen at the west end of the parish church. The interior of this building has all the melancholy that follows on a thorough restoration. My mother remembered it with galleries and high pews, in the spacious days of the forties and fifties, when fine preachers of the Evangelical school held forth in a three-decker, and Luke Sturley, the bewigged clerk, sitting beneath the pulpit, gave forth the sonorous Amen.

Luke Sturley, whose tomb-stone stands hard by the west door, died 1843, after having held the office of parish clerk for upwards of sixty years. His epitaph runs—

> "The graves around for many a year
> Were dug by him who slumbers here,
> Till worn with age he dropped his spade
> And in the dust his bones were laid.
> As he now mouldering shares the doom
> Of those he buried in the tomb,
> So will his body too with theirs arise,
> To share the judgment of the skies."

A memorial in the church to a member of the Butler family reminds us that Samuel Butler of Shrewsbury fame, grandfather of the author of 'Erewhon,' was born at Kenilworth.

BLACKDOWN, KENILWORTH

The castle is so haunted by trippers in the summer time, that in the tourist months it becomes more of a duty than a pleasure to visit its remarkable ruins.

The Norman portion, Caesar's Tower, recalls the Clinton

founders, who began the work in the twelfth century. The banqueting-hall with its splendid windows brings to mind John of Gaunt two hundred years later, and the rather thin and decayed Tudor portion with its large, square, mullioned windows is the work of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The hero of the place, who, I am afraid according to the popular suffrages is Elizabeth's Leicester, should be Simon de Montfort, who went down with the chivalry of Warwickshire—Astley, Birmingham, and Trussell—on a sultry August day, 1265, at the battle of Evesham.

By summoning the commons as well as the knights of his party to a Great Council, Simon set an example which was followed by Edward I in his model Parliament. After the battle, Simon's lieutenant, Henry de Hastings of Fillongley, held the castle against Henry III, till famine forced him to surrender.

Among the kings and queens, who have left memories of their sojourn here, is the unfortunate Edward II, imprisoned in 1326-7 before his removal to Berkeley. In the open fields between Kenilworth and Warwick his captors are said to have set him on a "moalehill," and shaved him, head and chin alike, with cold water taken from the ditch, despite his bitter tears. Drayton has described the scene in the "Barons' Wars." Among other royal visitors was Henry V, who made at the head of the lake a pleasure-house and garden of which the outline can still be traced at the Pleasance Farm between Kenilworth and Honiley. But the most celebrated visitor was Elizabeth, and is not the account of her coming in 1575 all written in Gascoigne's "Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth Castle," and Scott's "Kenilworth"? Amy Robsart,

Leicester's first wife, had died many years before this visit. Indeed, poor soul, she was found dead in 1560 at the foot of a "pair of stairs" at Cumnor Hall, near Oxford. Leicester having repudiated his second wife, the mother of the Robert Dudley of whom we have read at Stoneleigh, was in 1575

KENILWORTH COMMON

philandering with a third lady, Lettice, Countess of Essex, whose husband died complaisantly in the following year. It is this third wife, Lettice, whom we have seen lying by his side at Warwick. Leicester left an ill name in this county, and ugly traditions which gathered round him found their way

into Dugdale's pages. He is said to have pursued Edward Arden, for speaking with disapproval of his relations with Countess Lettice, to the death, but direct evidence for his responsibility for the untimely fate of Amy Robsart is to seek.

Dugdale records a characteristic tale of Leicester's oppressive dealings. The owner of the site of Kenilworth Priory was one John Colburn, "which John, having bought certain horses stolen out of the said Earle's Stables here at Kenilworth Castle, as was pretended, became so terrified by Leicester, that he quitted unto him all his Right therein upon easy Tearmes, as I have heard." No doubt Leicester required the land to round off his estate. We shall see in Birmingham how Leicester by these oppressions merely followed in the footsteps of his father, Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.

Those who wish to visualize Elizabeth's coming, July 9, 1575, should remember that she entered not by the present Gate House, but between the two large bastions at the entrance by the earthworks, known as the Brays, before the roadway from Warwick dips down to the Ford. The Queen rode along the tilt-yard, summit of the dam, which held back the waters of the great lake, and entered at Mortimer's Tower. She was met by various maskers, such as ten sybils, and the porter "with a club and keiz," while six trumpeters clad in "garments of silk" sounded a welcome. These "harmonious blasters, walking upon the walls, maintained their delectable music, while her Highness, all along the tilt-yard, rode into the inner gate."

During the Commonwealth period the castle was dismantled by Cromwell's officers, who also drained the lake, and the building gradually fell to ruin, such as we now behold.

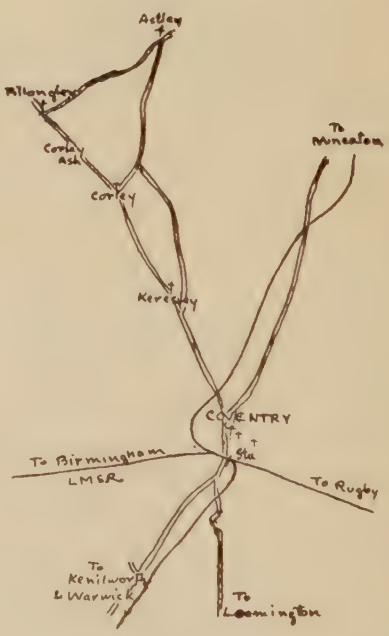
KENILWORTH

CHAPTER XXII

Coventry

THE more I write of Coventry the less I am able to put in words the spell it casts on those who love it.

In this wonderful place the old and new are inextricably mixed together. Tall factories break the line of streets dotted with Tudor gabled houses, their beams awry, their upper storeys overhanging the street, while plate-glass shop windows fill the lower portions of trim classic fronts, where sedate burghers lived under Queen Anne. There is no end to these startling contrasts. Factory work is still done, or was doing a year or so back, in a dismantled, but still palatial, banqueting room, where in 1687 Mass was celebrated in the presence of James II. In Coventry unexpected work of past centuries, though often hidden and fragmentary, is everywhere present, giving to streets and courts and houses a fascination which increases as the years pass.



COVENTRY

Beautiful houses are to be seen everywhere, in Butcher Row, a mediaeval thoroughfare, apparently doomed, though it has still escaped the improver's rage, in Cross Cheaping and Broadgate. There is a charming, but decayed, classic court in Little Park Street, a wonderful sight when the leaves turn in autumn; and some may like even more a splendid Queen Anne brick and stone house behind iron railings in St. Michael's churchyard, covering part of the ground where the old cathedral once stood. Perhaps the greatest treasure is Ford's Hospital, founded in 1529, where a door through a gabled and timbered frontage leads into an oblong courtyard, with overhanging storeys and gable ends. Another fine house, the work of many centuries, where the rough-cast hides ancient timbers, is Palace Yard in Earl Street, the interior courtyard showing some seventeenth century leadwork on gutters and rain spouts, with designs that are full of charm. It is here that James II, and afterwards his daughter, later Queen Anne, were entertained by the Hopkinses, the leading Whig family of Coventry, while two or three generations earlier at the time of the Gunpowder Plot (1605), Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I, and ancestress of the Hanoverian kings, found protection under Sampson Hopkins' roof.

Over this medley of old and new rise the three spires, so high and clear of their surroundings, that the factory blocks and the gigantic chimneys have not managed to dwarf them into insignificance.

Highest is St. Michael's, now the cathedral, with Trinity hard by—Trinity old spire fell down in the seventeenth century, and had to be rebuilt,—and nearer the city's edge is Christchurch, with the body of the fabric ugly and modern, but with

an ancient spire belonging to the former church of the Grey Friars, where the Hastings family lay buried. Everyone knows St. Michael's spire. It is one of the glories of these midland parts. About 300 feet high, it has nine storeys, including a lantern, with flying buttresses joined to the pinnacles of the tower, the decorations being lavished on the middle storeys for greater effect. Very wonderful is the sight of it framed by houses, when you have turned down from the High Street to Pepper Lane. Nearly all the memorable parts of Coventry were built between the early fourteenth and the early sixteenth centuries; St. Michael's chancel and tower belong to the late fourteenth and the nave and spire to the fifteenth century. It is possible that the west door was just complete when Henry VI, his sky already overcast with trouble, visited the church on Michaelmas Day, 1451, and gave a furred gown freely to God and St. Michael.

Within the church—or ought one to say cathedral?—is long and wide and shapeless, the fashion of adding side-chapels having broken in upon the original straightness of its lines. The pleasure that the sense of space and the uninterrupted view of the chancel give is marred by the crude Victorian glazing of the windows of the apse. The nave arcade is composed of low and slender piers, and even with the addition of a tall clerestory the whole does not give the impression of great height.

The chief beauty of the building lies in the ancient glass of the outer windows of the apse and of the clerestory, and people who have long sight should try and make out the little kneeling group of donors, a mother and her daughters in blue with high head-dresses, in the westernmost window of the

clerestory on the south side. Nor should any neglect the Drapers' or Lady chapel with its old woodwork screen (notice the little figures of beasts) and the misericords. These last show fine carvings of the chaining of Satan, the Last Judgment, and three scenes possibly taken from a series of the Seven Works of Mercy—Visiting the Sick, Clothing the Naked and Burying the Dead. The most wonderful example of these carvings is the Tree of Jesse, with an array of tiny figures, and if the light permit, seek out the little king, who has crossed his legs so as to reveal the side-laced shoes of the time of Edward IV. The iron-work handles of doors in the sanctuary are mediaeval, and in the apse windows are fragments of a Last Judgment, of figures of angels standing on the conventional wheels, and many beautiful heads. In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries Coventry was a centre of the glazier's art. There are two fine tombs, one in the Mercers' chapel on the south side, representing Dame Elizabeth Swillington and her two husbands, but finer still is the alabaster monument at the west end, showing Julines Nethermill and his wife and children, the men kneeling on one side, the women on the other, before an obliterated crucifix.

The architecture of Trinity with its fourteenth century nave arcade is very impressive, and it is hard to say whether this, or Warwick, is the most beautiful town church of the shire. The clerestory is of the fifteenth century, and there are some mysterious portions of earlier work on the north side. Fragments of old glass remain and some misericords were brought from Whitefriars, but the stone pulpit attached to a pier, and the brass eagle or lectern, with the charming little lions at the base, are the treasures of the church. Both are of the fifteenth

COVENTRY

century. The memorial to Philemon Holland, the translator, recalls a writer of the superb English of the seventeenth century.

The rarest thing within the city, however, is St. Mary Hall, which stands opposite the south porch of St. Michael's and is still used by the corporation as a meeting-place. Raised at the cost of the great guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Catherine, it belongs to the early fifteenth century, though the kitchen on the ground floor, probably the old hall, may be somewhat earlier in date. Concerning this building a volume might well be written, and above everything the beauty of the fifteenth century stained glass window with the figures of the kings of England and gorgeous heraldry, lays hold on the imagination. Not to be missed is the figure of the Emperor Constantine in the last light on the spectator's right hand. Instead of the orb and cross held by the other kings, the Roman Emperor, in memory of his mother St. Helena, holds an orb to which a representation of the true Cross is affixed, while the nails are not forgotten. Underneath is a magnificent piece of arras of the early sixteenth century, showing a king and queen, traditionally Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou and their courtiers, kneeling to adore the Virgin, and the Trinity or Christ in Majesty, the last now represented by a figure of Justice. Above the king, queen and courtiers is a line of saints, male and female. One must not insist too strongly upon the subject of the tapestry, it was evidently worked after well-known patterns, though designed for the place where it now hangs. During the last Great War, both tapestry and glass were hidden safely underground.

Within the last year some public spirited citizens have

acquired for the city the manuscript Register of the Trinity Guild, beautifully coloured and written on parchment, which contains the names, not only of merchants and craftspeople, but also of brethren of the guild of great honour and place, such as Henry IV and Henry VI, and the uncles of Richard II, John of Gaunt and Thomas of Woodstock.

In the Muniment Room on the ground floor are many treasures and specimens of handwriting. The oldest charter is that bestowed on the citizens by Henry II, about 1186; that of Ranulf, Earl of Chester, may be twenty years later. Among the outstanding features of the collection should be numbered the beautiful red oval of the seal of Isabella, queen of Edward II, and the interesting specimens of those of Bagot and Green, favourites of Richard II. The curious document locally known as "Clarence's pawn-ticket," refers to a coronal "garnished with diamonds, rubies and sapphires," which that unhappy duke left in pledge in return for a loan of 300 marks from the citizens. The sole example of a Coventry manuscript religious play is also kept here.

No one should miss St. John's Church, belonging to the great guild, or the remains of monastic buildings of White Friars, now the Workhouse, where the inmates' dining room is formed of part of the beautiful cloister with fifteenth century groining. On the upper storey the dormitory of the friars is also left. The house was founded by Sir John Poultney, member of the London company of Drapers and four times mayor of London.

Behind the splendour of all these buildings is a wonderful history, of kings, nobles, monks and merchants, but principally of men and women whom the tabernacle chapters of the Book

of Exodus call "wise-hearted," who devise "cunning work" with their hands. The web of the narrative is often shot with the threads of the history of rebellion, and it is not for nothing that John Ball, who preached from the text—

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

was taken in hiding here after the collapse of Wat Tyler's revolt. Among fifteenth century rebels stands out the dyer, Lawrence Saunders, who tried to preserve the grazing lands for the citizens at the time of the wool-boom. In matters of religion, too, Coventry was inclined to cast authority aside. In spite of the power of the Church and the number of monastic houses here, Lollardry took a hold on the citizens. It is almost needless to say that Coventry sided with the Parliament and shut the gates on Charles I.

The true Coventry-born display an almost fierce pride in the place of their nativity, despising the new-comer. The place has a compelling power, and I have known men of imaginative cast of mind spend themselves in its service, recking nothing of gratitude or reward. It is, no doubt, childhood's associations that call forth this pride and love, not the beauty of the place or its traditions, for men will show an equal devotion in a pottery town or mining village, but those who can enjoy the beauty and traditions gain in some sort their reward.

COVENTRY

CHAPTER XXIII

Corley and George Eliot

CORLEY is beautiful in all seasons, in the spring when the ash-trees are pale green, in June when the bracken is unfurling, and the foxgloves are shoulder-high in the woods, and in early autumn, when the delicate purple of the elder trees first shows in the hedgerows. The great feature of the country is the holly hedges, which grow so thick and dark over the deep narrow lanes, that huntsmen coming home in the winter dusk might fear to lose their way. This year (1923), on account of the mild winter, and the great profusion of hips on the may-trees, the holly berries, neglected by the birds, have remained, tipping the dark boughs with rare scarlet, all the summer through. It is a comfortable country, where brickbuilt villages are scarcely as picturesque as those of the Vale of the Red Horse; from the ridge, however, there are distant views, northwards over the grey chimney-dotted, toilsome England, and southwards over rural England as far as the distant hills. It is in the fields beyond the church on the Meriden Road that these southern slopes appear all tree-grown; there is scarcely a dwelling to be seen; and on clear days the pale outline of the Napton and Edge hills and the Cotswolds stand out against the sky.

The best outlook can always be gained by straying into the fields and alongside the woods. Sightseers who visit Corley Rock, stronghold of the ancient days, only have the less interesting northern and north-eastern view, but out

towards Kinwaldsey and Meriden by One Ash Farm, the prospect opens south and west over undulating country to the Malverns and the Lickeys, while nearer than the white smoke of Birmingham rises the unearthly beauty of Coleshill spire. Then, too, there is a field near Fillongley that you reach from a little embowered lane.....but why should I tell all the secrets of the place? Builders may come and scare away the rabbits, the rightful denizens of the fields, and with the solitude the elusive beauty will be gone.

How good it would be if some part of this ridge, which stands so high, overlooking a countryside over which three great towns, Birmingham, Coventry and Nuneaton, encroach daily, could be saved from the hasty and unwise builder and purchased, as a sanctuary for the beasts and birds, a national possession.

There is a cuckoo, who had won for his dominion the southern slope beyond Church Farm at Corley, but his far-off call and the unceasing song of the birds seem but to make more peaceful the immense peace that broods over the little church on the crest of the hill. The churchyard graves, where the Proofs, the Steans, the Clarks and the Moggses lie, are overgrown with "kecksies" in the summer, and there is a glimpse between the evergreens of a country that is blue, and far off. Part of the church is very old, and the great wych-elm in the churchyard must be old likewise; above all, there is that indescribable sense of hallowing that inhabits these ancient places, where for generations men have sought protection from evil.

The bells have to be rung from the inside of the church for the wooden bell turret is so little and so low.

HUNTING SCENE

The buttresses are delicately proportioned, and there are some strange corbel-heads, a fox's, and a devil's with horns and crawling serpent. A bat's head can be made out on a capital of the south door, but the diapered work on the tympanum here looks restored, and indeed the west end, which matters little, is wholly new.

Within the thick walls all is grave and quiet, and, as a church should be, touched with history. A point for architects is furnished by the north wall of the nave, and its two small windows. Parts of this may be "possibly pre-Norman," says Mr. Jethro Cossins; at any rate, the masonry of the wall above the arcade must be older than the massive arcade beneath, for when the Norman builders wished to add an aisle to the old church, they did not pull down the wall above, but made openings for the new arcade, thereby curtailing one of the windows of its length, as they also did at Tysoe in the Vale of the Red Horse.

The memory of the saint to whom Corley church was dedicated has been strangely lost sight of, just as in the case of Atherstone-on-Stour, and Compton Wynyates. I have a treasured theory—which is alas! but a theory—that the builders of this little place set so high chose for patron the archangel Michael, supreme champion in the struggle of good against evil, who fought with and overcame the dragon, who was bound a thousand years.

The theory is supported by an interpretation of a piece of rude sculpture on the half-pillar west of the pulpit, of which Ribton Turner says—somewhat cavalierly—that it represents "the head of an angel, with a wing, an animal of some kind, and an instrument like a comb," or to my mind St. Michael,

to whom the artist accorded but one wing, and the head and neck of the arch-foe. Moreover, while I do not discern the comb-like instrument, something, which may be a lethal weapon, certainly adheres to the neck of the monster. Have we here a key to the lost dedication? It is a nice point for enquiry.

ST. MICHAEL AND THE DRAGON, CORLEY

There are many points of interest in the strong, dark old church. The north aisle windows are of the fourteenth century, and the steps to the rood-loft are of oak, not stone. Moreover, a scrap of old painting, a woman's robed figure, is to be seen on the north wall. The font is far older than the date 1661 with the initials cut upon it. A lamp has been given as a thank offering for a safe return from the Boer War, and last, there is a tablet to the "glad and proud memory" of one who was at Neuve Chapelle in 1916, and did not come back.

So history moves on, never finishing, and the cup of human joy and sorrow is filled and emptied forever.

Old as the church is, the entrenchments on the Rock, or Burrow Hill, as it is called, are older yet. Did the primitive Corley church-goers, I wonder, think that evil emanated from the place, where, looking north and north-east over the wide

plain, is the camp made by unknown men? Who were the people who first dug out these trenches and made these mounds, using the sheer fall of the rock as the first line of their defence? The camp, a rough square containing some eight and a half acres where a thousand men could find place is bounded on every side, even the rocky slope, with an earthen rampart now about thirty feet wide, and three to ten feet high. Some outer fortification may have Roman features, but there is only one entrance, that on the north-west side. In the centre is a pit fed by a spring, which gave water to those within the lines of defence. Only excavation, say those who know—and already diggers are working there under expert guidance—can solve the riddle of the age and the makers of this ancient stronghold. Yet even a tyro on the subject—like the present writer—finds imagination at work on the contemplation of Corley Rock. One seems to see a primitive scout straining his eyes north and north-east over the unending plain for the approaching foe.

About Corley, Astley, the pools of Arbury, and over as far as the chimney shafts of Nuneaton, where the land is black with the toil of the coalfield, the country is—not classic in the Stratford sense—but still full of associations with a famous name. It is the country through which Robert Evans, a land-agent of the Newdigates, drove continually in his gig, his "little wench" standing between his knees. How the child must have gazed with the unwavering eyes of childhood at men and cattle and landscape, unconsciously registering sights and sounds in her marvellous brain for future use. No one can hope to write of that country and its contrasts so well as George Eliot has done in the opening pages of "Felix Holt,"

and taking account of inevitable mutations, village and town and farm must still present themselves much as they did to her childish vision, before this lapse of years. Likeness persists, in spite of change. Griff has become a suburb of Nuneaton ; Coventry factories have opened their doors to the Foleshill handloom-weaver ; a mining village has even sprung up at Wood End, Fillongley ; but there are still deep-rutted lanes, grass-grown, by Corley ; Astley looks ancient and peaceful still, and the beautiful, wasteful hedges—did anyone ever write so happily about hedges as George Eliot ?—with their nuts and berries, trailing brambles, and scented honey-suckle, flourish still. The old coaches, the Tally-ho and Independent, vanished, of course, long before the advent of the motor, and I fancy there is not so much good horse-flesh in the country as there was in Fred Vincy's time. Since the War, too, it may be farmhouse tables are not so plenteously spread as they were in the days when Mrs. Tulliver kept house at Dorlcote Mill, but golden-billed ducks abound, calves low at milking-time, and the moss grows on the shed. There is still a walnut avenue by Corley Hall, and types of men change not. The auctioneer, who comes over from Coventry, will resemble in main lines Mr. Trumbull in "Middlemarch." How money will be left is still a matter of the most anxious solicitude, as it was among the Featherstones and Waules, and the Mr. Mosses of our day, farmers without capital, for all their toiling and moiling can scarcely save a ha'penny off the land. As for small boys, they handle knife and rod familiarly as of yore, and are knowing in the ways of bird and beast, while little sisters, reverent and adoring, trot after them in the dewy fields.

Further down the hill leading beneath the Rock from Corley to Astley, behind a pillared gateway topped by heraldic griffins, stands a charming Jacobean house with gabled wings. This is Corley Hall, which surely furnished suggestions for the picture of the Hall Farm, home of Mrs. Poyser, in George Eliot's "Adam Bede." "Evidently, that gate is never opened," said the novelist, and it is never opened still. Though at the back the house keeps its surface of pleasing red, the frontage is now concealed by a covering of rough cast. In the field at the back, there still stand the remains of that "grand double row of walnut" trees, and the cows low and the dogs bark and the hens scratch with their chicks among the straw. The old features abide, though I doubt if the "whittaws" have come to mend the saddlery this many a day. Inside the house is gayer with modern furniture than would have been permitted in Mrs. Poyser's days, and one naturally looks in vain for the fleeces of wool stacked up, the empty corn-bags, the spinning wheel and pillion, and all the ancient litter within the front door mentioned in "Adam Bede." The dairy with its dark thralls, "soft colouring of red earthenware and creamy surfaces," is a picture, though it is said that the original of poor Hetty's dairy is at Griff, George Eliot's own home.

There are features of the house unrecorded by the novelist, and a tradition, doubtless quite unfounded, says that Henry VII slept there either before (or after) Bosworth Field. In the best sitting-room there is some heraldic painted glass, perhaps from some old house now destroyed, with the royal Tudor coat-of-arms, England and France quarterly, the lions and the lilies, surrounded by fragments of the motto of the

WARWICKSHIRE BLUE-BELL WOOD

Garter. The staircase is Jacobean and in a bedroom there remains a row of very curious wooden heads of this period, carved in full relief. Altogether a very interesting house which I cannot find the history of. George Eliot's explanation of it is quite likely to be true. She thinks "it was once the residence of a country squire, whose family probably dwindling down to mere spinsterhood, got merged" into a larger territorial name.

Do people read "Adam Bede" now? Trollope has come into his own. Dickens with his marvellous creative vitality seems to be acknowledged chief of the Victorians, but the memory of George Eliot has grown somewhat dim in these later years. Perhaps her style and humour are a little unreliable, though her great qualities need no bush. It may be that her melancholy prevents her from making way with a generation that loves mirth and a light touch. Certainly, she is one of the saddest of authors. It is as if her memory had received a wound which could not heal. In spite of its country atmosphere, the charm of the family church-going and Mrs. Poyser's wit, "Adam Bede" is a book one cannot bear to read, it is so overcast by the cruel story of Hetty's fate. Perhaps only poets, for poetry purges the soul with pity, should touch on a theme that breaks the heart.

The result of the excavations on Corley Rock will, no doubt, invalidate the authorities on which I have drawn for description of the camp.

CHAPTER XXIV

Fillongley and the Castle of the Hastingses

I LIKE a village to have some quality in it, some salt like the talk of a person who has thought and felt. Fillongley undeniably has quality, though it is not picturesque like the stone villages of the south, or those of timber and thatch in the midst of the shire. Yet its brick-built street with one or two classic houses and fanlights over the doors, the old "Bell" Inn with its sign, its old stone courtyard and long flight of outside steps, are full of character. The Manor-house, a timbered gable, displays pargeting work, which is less frequently met with in Warwickshire than in the eastern counties. The church has a massive tower, and in the churchyard are remains of a fourteenth century cross. A fine old yew, aged and bent, that needs propping, shelters gravestones and ancient graves. There lie generations of Garners and Cashes and Eves and Morwoods and Becks, and in the church lie the Holbechs and the Shakespears. I have met many of these people's names in seventeenth century deeds, particularly the Becks and Morwoods, who belonged to the little yeomanry and sometimes, falling on evil days, mortgaged their farms to wealthy Coventry tradesmen. The Holbeches were climbing people, and one branch of the family acquired the Raleighs' estate at Farnborough in the south part of the county, where their descendants still live.

The church itself has pleasing features, such as a good old font of the twelfth century with bulging panels divided by

fillets. The autumn afternoon was growing dark when I visited it, and one gained an impression of coloured dusk from the modern stained glass windows. It seemed to need those twinkling red sanctuary-lamps which shine perpetually in the churches of the Old Religion. I ought to have noticed the fragments of old stained glass in the nave and north chancel aisle windows, and some fourteenth century panelling on a seat in the north chancel aisle, but I fear I missed these features in the twilight.

No one so far as I know has investigated the pedigree of the Fillongley Shakespears. Some of them lived in the old square eighteenth century house opposite the church, and cut little mottoes and posies with a diamond on the panes of the windows. One of these cuttings, showing E.S. (Elizabeth Shakespear) enclosed in a little floreated heart has, I regret to say, dropped out and been broken, but another little posy about daily friendship and married love, which must have been written by a young husband, still remains. In the church is a coat-of-arms, Shakespear impaling another coat, the paternal arms being those of a very distinguished Warwickshire poet, who seemed

> "to shake a lance
> As brandish't in the face of Ignorance."

The lion of Fillongley, however, is the castle, or rather two lions for there are two castles, of which Dugdale says, "the Ruines are of two Castles, one to the North East of the Church about a quarter of a mile, to this day called by the name of the Castle Hills, and the other Southwards from the Church, scarce Half that Distance, bearing the Name of Castle Yard (and which was standing 18 Edward II)," to which a

park of very large extent was attached. The first of these is approached by a way between the church and the Vicarage, and the second by a way by the "Bell" Inn between some cottages and an old malt-house. Concerning the first, I had the following description given me by a native. "It lies in Bury Field, and there is a mountain and hole called the Frying Pan, where the castle was swallowed up by an earthquake in Oliver Cromwell's day!" *Toujours* Oliver Cromwell! He partakes of something of the character of Old Nick. The Castle Yard lies in a small three-cornered piece of land formed by two brooks, where are abundant signs of earthworks, while gnarled and ancient trees, oak and ash, encompass with their trunks and roots meaningless heaps of masonry and wall. The guidebooks say it was blown up by gunpowder, but the amiable lad, who showed me the way through the mud and across the streams, knew better than that. "Oliver Cromwell," he said, "blew the castle down as well as the top of the church tower." People had been digging there of late, and found some deer's antlers there and "fine marble stuff, white and brown," by which, I suppose, he meant glazed tiles. Near by he pointed out the Devil's Hole, water overhung by trees, altogether a ghostly place.

I tried to get some more of the village talk from the ancientry, who abound there, and was led to see the most ancient woman of them all, who lived in a little old house not far from the "Bell." We went through a brilliant and uninhabited parlour, resplendent with china ornaments of castles and a spun-glass ship under a shade. It seemed sacrilege to go through such a spotless place; only at weddings and funerals are these *arcana* opened.

Seated in a dark interior by the cavernous depths of an open fireplace sat a very old woman. She was old beyond the telling, at least she owned to ninety years. She sat in the dusk, her white face enclosed by a sunbonnet. But my questions only troubled her. "Garner," she said querulously in her hard deaf voice, "I remember my aunt Garner, she was a little woman no taller than you. I can't remember, I'm so old. Bill could remember if he came back." Bill was her eldest son. "Yes, my aunt Garner, she must have been dead these thirty years." But the daughter standing by said it would be more like fifty. Yes, they were all dead. There was no knowledge to be gained from her already clouding brain. So after a little friendly talk I departed.

The Castle Yard was a mount-and-court fortress occupied by the Hastingses early in the reign of Henry I, and was afterwards their chief residence in Warwickshire. They had lands in many shires, and marrying rich heiresses came to hold the titles of Pembroke and Abergavenny. They fought in all the great English wars. Henry de Hastings, who took up arms against Henry III as an adherent of Simon de Montfort, was buried in the Hastings' chapel at the Greyfriars church at Coventry. There he lay with his wife, Joanna, daughter of William de Cantilupe and sister of St. Thomas de Cantilupe of Hereford. John de Hastings, a warrior of the days of Edward I, held land in ten counties besides the marches of Wales and Ireland. Through his mother, the Cantilupe, he inherited the title of Abergavenny. His wife was Isabel of Valence, sister to Aymer of Valence, Earl of Pembroke, and through his grandmother, he laid claim, as did Balliol and Bruce, to the crown of Scotland. Of him it was said that in

deeds of arms he was daring and fearless, in the hostel mild and gracious, nor was there ever judge in eyre more worthy to judge rightly. He too was laid in the Greyfriars chapel with Isabel, his wife. The arms of Hastings and Cantilupe and Valence were in the windows there, and the pillows and gowns of some of the ladies were powdered with the arms of Hastings and Huntingfield. There too was buried Robert de Shotesbroke, a most valiant esquire, standard-bearer and steward to Sir Henry. One could write a history of the days of chivalry from the doings of the clan. Another Hastings who served in Edward III's wars was a protector of Froissart. The estate eventually passed to the Beauchamps, Lords of Abergavenny. What memories of men of renown haunt this place with the strange, tree-grown stones.

The rain was coming on as I left Fillongley, and in cottage parlours the lamps were lit. We drove quickly past Corley church, the road which leads to the Rock, and the darkling, unhomely fields. Presently we came to the lights of Coventry at the foot of the hill.

VILLAGE MUSICIAN

CHAPTER XXV

Astley and "Knebley"

ASTLEY may be approached by the lane which leads past Corley Hall down Butterfly Lane, or from the Nuneaton side through Arbury Park, which is, however, a private road. The first way has the advantage of charming country, but the second way touches on associations with George Eliot, since one may see Chilvers Coten church, very restored, but still keeping its flight of outside steps, and Griff House, where is a famous attic associated with Maggie Tulliver and her battered doll, while in the Park stands the South Farm where the novelist was born. George Eliot in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," has written of Arbury, the "castellated house of grey tinted stone.....and the great pool, where a pair of swans are swimming lazily, with one leg tucked under a wing, and where the open waterlilies lie calmly accepting the kisses of the fluttering light-sparkles, the lawn, with its smooth emerald greenness, sloping down to the rougher and browner herbage of the park."

Arbury Park maintains a bulwark of greenery against the black world of the collier, and Astley with its ancient church and moated castle among the trees seems to belong so completely to a world apart, that it is hardly thinkable that two or three miles off men are going down into the pits by shifts, night and day.

The church, which is of dark stone with a timbered porch and a seventeenth century tower, is but a relic of its former

state. Once it was like a cathedral in little, where dean and canons and vicars and clerks had a daily task of "remembering before God" the souls of departed Astleys in their prayers, and its steeple, the "lantern of Arden," guided men along the wooded ways.

Now the spire is gone and the chancel turned into a nave serves but as a reminder of the ancient splendours, while under the tower, effigies of people of great consideration and bearing ancient names shew traces of wanton mishandling in past years.

The place abounds in associations. It was Thomas, son of Giles de Astley, who in the reign of Edward III founded a college of priests there for his soul's peace. An ancestor had fought and died under Simon of Montfort at the battle of Evesham, and the Astleys came of a powerful stock, and were well-allied. After some generations an heiress carried the land to the Greys, for it so often befell—perhaps because the men were killed off by fighting—that lands and wealth devolved on women; hence generation after generation of prudential marriages brought into one line an accumulation of titles and estates. In 1464 the widow of a Grey—by maiden name Elizabeth Woodville—married Edward IV. Her son by the first marriage, Thomas, Marquis of Dorset, held Astley, and his son and his son's son. This last, better known as the Duke of Suffolk, by allying himself with Henry VII's grand-daughter, Frances Brandon, brought into his line the perilous strain of royal blood.

Close to the church stands the moated and battlemented Tudor castle, offering through an arched gateway a glimpse of green garden and ancient stone. This is a rebuilding (about

1550) of the ancient dwelling of the Greys, and recalls the tragedy of Mary's reign, Suffolk's lost hopes, and Lady Jane's piteous fate. Whether Lady Jane ever lived here I know not, and by no colour can the effigy of a woman with flowing hair within the church be held to be hers, since the dress shows that it belongs to a Grey of some three or four generations back; nevertheless Lady Jane's ancestors were lords of Astley; here they lie buried; and with Astley is bound up the memory of her father's final failure and last days of freedom.

This is all part of English history. They say in the castle are a table and chair, that Suffolk had with him in hiding after his unsuccessful attempt (January, 1554) to raise the Midlands against Mary and the Spanish match. Opinion in Warwickshire was divided, and according to one account, Suffolk's messenger coming at nightfall missed his chance at Coventry, a key city, where Protestant feeling was high. Next morning when Suffolk came, he found his enemies in readiness and the gates of the city closed against him. Knowing all was lost he fled to Astley, where he lay concealed until a servant betrayed his hiding-place.

Dugdale, who heard the facts from the traditional talk of the countryside, says after his quaint manner, how the Earl of Huntington "was sent with a Power into these Parts to prevent all Danger; which occasioned him (*i.e.* Suffolk) seeing he was forsaken, to put himself under the Trust of one Underwood, (as 'tis said) a keeper of his Park here at Astley, who hid him some few days in a large hollow tree there, standing about two Bow-shoot South-Westwards from the Church; but being promised a Reward, betray'd him; so that it was not long ere he lost his Head on Tower Hill."

This hazardous attempt of the Protestants brought Lady Jane also to her end, and Suffolk's widow, no doubt conscious of the peril of her royal lineage, sought safety in a speedy marriage with Adrian Stokes, a mere esquire of obscure birth. It is this Adrian and a Chamberlain, whose family succeeded the Greys at Astley, who are pilloried by Dugdale for their share in the destruction of so much of the church's magnificence. "After which," says the great antiquary, "the Lady Frances, his (*i.e.*, Suffolk's) widow married to one Adrian Stokes, Esq., who, holding this Lordship as part of her Dowrie, much defac'd the Church.....(and) caused the tall and costly Spire made of Timber, together with the Battlements, all cover'd with Lead, to be pull'd down, being a Landmark so eminent in this part of the Woodland, where the Ways are not easy to hit, that it was called the Lanthorn of Arden. As also the two fair Iles (aisles) and a goodly building called S. Annes Chappell, adjoyning, the Roofs of which were likewise leaded. By Reason of which sacrilegious action, the Steeple, standing in the midst, took Wet and decayed, so that about the year 1600 it fell down to the Ground and with it, a great Part of the Church."

As this state of things could not be suffered to continue, Richard Chamberlain, with help from the country, set about the church's repair. This he accomplished by the disastrous process of pulling down nave, cross-aisles, and two choir chapels, containing Grey and Dorset tombs, "with their Statues in alabaster excellently cut," turning the old choir into the nave, and building a fresh one from the materials of a choir-chapel he had destroyed.

"At the pulling down and translating of which Chappell,"

says Dugdale, "it was resolved that the Monuments should be set up again in the Church.....Howbeit, this good Intention afterwards cooled and the Statues of the Marquess (of Dorset) and his Lady were cast into the Belfry," while others were "thrown into an old Outhouse amongst Lime and Rubbish: all which I myself have seen," he says, concluding the tale of carelessness and greed.

Thus it is that Astley shows together with the relics of mediaeval grandeur a tower and chancel of the seventeenth century. Yet there are traces remaining of the ancient glory, some old glass mainly grotesque, dragons and the like, in the upper lights in the nave, and stalls with carved heads, nine each side. The latter are adorned with painted figures bearing scrolls with inscribed texts on the backs above the seats, but whether the figures were originally intended to be prophets with verses of Messianic prophecy, or the apostles with portions of the Creed, I know not. Eighteen is a difficult number to fit into any series. Above the cusped arches of the stalls runs a painted vine pattern; the whole looks a mixture of the mediaeval and the classic, but the effect is very delightful. Over the chancel arch they have preserved the tracery of the magnificent choir window, but blocked up. As for the alabaster effigies of departed Greys, they lie sadly scarred under the tower. The bare-headed warrior cut in alabaster has elaborately carved armour of plate and leather, of a fashion contemporary with that of Richard Beauchamp at Warwick, with a pauldron, or protection for the left shoulder, and Lancastrian collar of SS., a decoration once ranking next to the Garter. This effigy probably represents Edward Grey, Lord Ferrars of Groby, who died in 1457. The figure of the

TIMBERED HOUSE AND APPLE BLOSSOM

lady lying next, small and slight, in a mantle, a tight-sleeved kirtle and collar of roses, seems to be a Lady de L'Isle, whose tomb with that of her husband, who died 1491, formerly stood in the south chapel of the choir. Like Anne, Richard III's queen, she wears flowing hair. Her husband's tomb has not survived, nor has that of Thomas Grey, Marquis of Dorset, who bequeathed his body to be buried "before the Image of the Blessed Trinity, in the midst of his Closet," making a special bequest for prayers to be said "for the souls of his mother, Queen Elizabeth Woodville, King Edward IV, and all Christian souls."

He was a man of note in his day, and had an adventurous life, of which he spent part in exile in Brittany with Richmond, later Henry VII, both being objects of suspicion to Richard III. It is perhaps his wife's effigy with a striking pedimental head-dress lying beyond that of Lady de L'Isle, but the carving has suffered irreparable hurt.

There are also early seventeenth century framed texts painted on the walls; the people of that age, in spite of their ill-doing sought to add to the church's worth. I like, too, an epitaph, which 'laments' some spinster probably a waiting gentlewoman or poor relation of the Newdigate family, Mrs. Lettice Bolton, "who lived very handsomely upon a narrow fortune. Her life was without trouble, and her death without pain. She expired suddenly the 17th February, 1694." How did Richard Newdigate, Esq., who put up the memorial, know of a surety that Mistress Lettice was thus content? She may have wished to be rich and courted like my Lady, or loved like the little housemaid, who swept the stairs. Was she a brave woman to deceive the grandly careless Mr. Newdigate,

or a mere nonentity, that did tent-stitch, tied down the preserve, patted her spaniel, and so passed out of the world ?

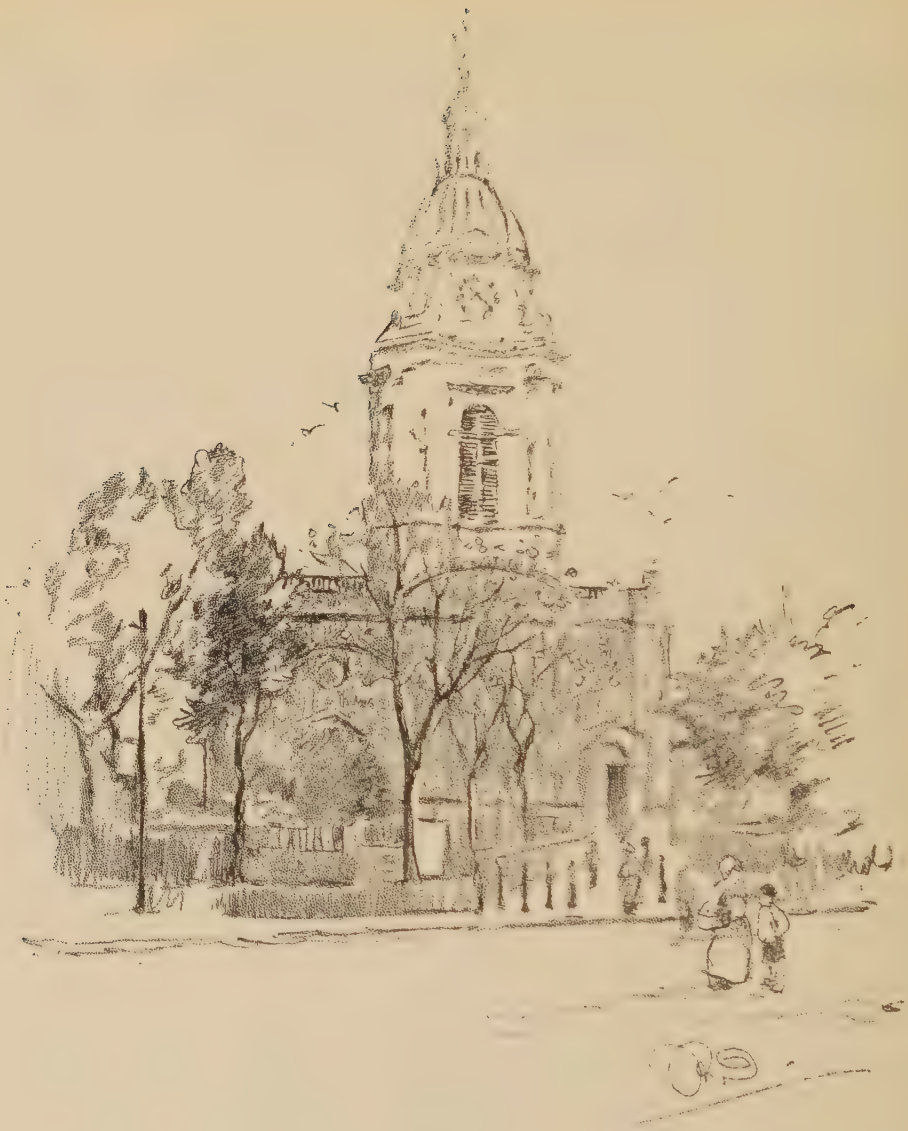
The church figures as Knebley in " Mr. Gilfil's Love Story " —George Eliot, in her most pleasantly reminiscent hour. She describes it—memory playing her false in trifles—as " the wonderful little church with a checkered pavement, which had once rung to the iron tread of military monks, with coats of arms in clusters on the lofty roof, marble warriors and their wives without noses occupying a large proportion of the area, and the twelve apostles with their heads very much on one side, holding didactic ribbons painted in fresco on the walls."

In the days of George Eliot's childhood the congregation " sat under " the Rev. Bernard Gilpin Ebdell, original of Mr. Gilfil of the " Love Story," who married Sally Shilton, Lady Newdigate's protegée, the collier's daughter, with the beautiful voice. Mr. Gilfil is one of the most attractive portraits in the writer's gallery of clerics, which includes Mr. Farebrother in " Middlemarch." A pleasantly human parson, he talked of " sharrogs and yowes " (sheer-hogs and ewes) with the farmers, and kept sugar-plums in his pocket for the children. His duties, she says, were performed with " undeviating attention to brevity and despatch," including somewhat perfunctory exhortations to a somnolent congregation.

He had a large heap of short sermons, " rather yellow and worn at the edges, from which he took two every Sunday securing perfect impartiality in the selection of them as they came, without reference to topics ; and having preached one of these sermons at Shepperton (Chilvers-Coton) in the morning, he mounted his horse and rode hastily with the other in his pocket to Knebley." There " the farmers' wives and

children sate on dark oaken benches, but the husbands usually chose the distinctive dignity of a stall under one of the twelve apostles, where, when the alternation of prayers and responses had given place to the agreeable monotony of the sermon, Paterfamilias might be seen or heard sinking into a pleasant doze, from which he infallibly woke up at the sound of the concluding doxology."

What a wonderful description of a country church a hundred years ago! Then with a flash the picture changes. We are taken four centuries back, and in the winter afternoon we see the magnificent choir, a glimmer of candles, a little surpliced throng, and hear the drone of the dirge.



BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL

CHAPTER XXVI

Birmingham New and Old

NEW Birmingham is not very different from other great towns, though since it lies high, there is a good tang of freshness in the air. There is the everlastingly moving crowd in New Street, a glitter of shops and big buildings that must fulfil some useful purposes; while in the suburb I know best, where whole families make jewelery in small workshops, trams run all day, and most of the night with a rythmic rise and fall of sound, and a recurring bump, bump, at the top of the hill.

It is mostly a gray city, save at sunset when chimney and spire are wrapped in a golden haze; or, in the cathedral where Burne Jones' and Morris's window of the "Last Judgment" glows like some red-petalled flower. But it is gray, gray, in Floodgate Street, a classic slum area, under the huge railway arch in the courts where swarms of children play, and brown paper squares replace missing window panes. I know children can be beautiful and happy there, because a little brown-eyed girl smiled at me; whether they should be in a place like this, happy or unhappy, is another question.

There are pleasant places in New Birmingham, the Reference Library, for instance, where books are delivered quite quickly, a Paradise for those with a point to look up, just in the half-hour before the departure of the country train. At the Repertory Theatre, too, plays are given that appeal to the few, not merely for profit, thanks to Mr. Barry Jackson,

but in the interest of dramatic art.* It is a notable venture, and the theatre's reputation proves that Birmingham is intellectually alive. There is also a musical set in the city which flocks to concerts given in the great classic Town Hall, and some of the rising singers of the present day are Birmingham men and women.

Though New Birmingham is well enough, there are times when old Birmingham is more to my mind. Few strangers explore that part of the city, which begins by St. Martin's church close to the Market Hall, and extends down the hill past Digbeth to Deritend. All sorts of people gather hereabouts, some walking footsorely, and as if they were but indifferently shod. Were the sainted Martin alive—a darkened old painting of him dividing his cloak, to give half to the naked beggar, is in the church hard by—he would be daily pulling the shoes from his feet for the poor—the blessed one!—and going barefoot home.

Names of thoroughfares hereabouts recall the past. The Bull-Ring needs no comment. Spiceal Street must have been the home of the grocers, *épiciers*, or sellers of spice, while Moat Lane commemorates the fortified manor of the De Birminghams, whose effigies lie in the brown dusk that pervades the interior of St. Martin's church. It is a dusk that when you enter recalls Westminster Abbey, though the architecture is not pointed French Gothic, but Victorian work, albeit solid and good of its kind, and there is no central vaulting of stone, but a hammer-beam timber roof.

The great treasures of the church, however, are in the

* Alas! since I wrote this the theatre has been temporarily closed.

chancel, where, saved from the older building, which this has replaced, lie four effigies, three knights and a churchman, very grand and still. The two more ancient lie to the north, carved in stone, the later ones are on the south side, carved in alabaster from the quarries of Chellaston in Derbyshire, the marble now brown and dark as the church itself. The three knightly effigies show the gradual change from mail to plate armour which took place in the fourteenth century. At Aston church we shall presently see the further development of plate in the century that followed.

Plate armour superseded chain mail during the Wars of Edward III. "The increased protection it gave to the body," says Professor Oman, "was won at the cost of a notable addition of weight; the knight of 1350, with his elaborate double sheathing of plate laid above the original mail, had lost the power of rapid and easy movement which the knight of 1250 still possessed." Yet armour became ever thicker and heavier to afford better protection against the piercing arrow, so that warriors became exhausted by its weight early in the battle, and died from suffocation rather than from the weapons of the foe. It is said that at Agincourt the French men-at-arms were so worn out by walking for a mile, over boggy fields, that they fell an easy prey to the English bowmen. The French huddled together, and the English, throwing their bows aside, flung themselves with swords and mallets on the heavily armed foe, "like smiths hammering upon anvils," until the French were broken or dead on the field.

The first of the Birmingham knights is clad in mail of the period before 1350; the other two show the growing complexities of heavy plate armour—covering a shirt of mail—

about the years 1370 and 1400. They all wear the bascinet or skull cap, to which is attached the camail, or tippet of mail, that framed the face and protected the neck. In later effigies at Aston the warrior appears with the head bare. The earliest of the three Birmingham figures is that of a warrior who, save for his bascinet and the greaves on his shins, is mail-clad. He wears a long surcoat, meant to shade the metal from the sun in the burning East, and protect it from wet in northern lands, and carries a shield charged with his arms, which have been adopted by the modern corporation of Birmingham. Shields were later discarded owing to the perfection of plate armour. His posture is easy, all the more so because the artist has represented him according to the prevalent English fashion, as cross-legged—a convention which has nothing whatever to do with the Crusades—whereas the attitude of the other knights, with straight plate-clad limbs, is comparatively stiff and strained. These latter wear the jupon or short surcoat, probably of leather, and generally charged with the wearer's arms. At Aston we shall find the jupon discarded in the fifteenth century, and the knight arrayed in full panoply with breast-plate and skirt of steel.

These three knightly effigies most likely commemorate Sir William, Sir Fulk, and Sir John de Birmingham, members of a family who were lords of this manor for some four hundred years. We find them playing their part in war and peace, notably at Evesham under Simon de Montfort, until at length, by guile of an Ahab at Dudley Castle, they were dispossessed of that vineyard, their fair inheritance. It seems, according to the tradition Dugdale had "of divers discreet persons," that Edward Birmingham was the victim of a false

accusation, the hirelings of that rascally favourite of Henry VIII, Dudley, later Duke of Northumberland, conspiring to make the luckless man appear a highway robber. Observing Birmingham's times of riding out alone, the rogues sent one of their gang on ahead, while they in outwardly harmless guise "watcht an opportunity to strike into Master Bermingham's Company as Travailers, with whom they soberly rode for a While; but being come up to their Confederate, forthwith set upon him for his Purse, so that the Villain, thus seemingly rob'd, makes Pursuit after them, and likewise after Master Bermingham as one of the Pack." Birmingham, overwhelmed at this accusation of felony and in terror of his life, sought to make his peace by handing over his lands to the king, who in good time granted them to the plotter of this iniquity. The Italians say, "the devil's flour turns to bran," and Northumberland did not long enjoy his ill-gotten gains. After his execution as a traitor in Mary's reign, his forfeited lands again reverted to the crown.

But we have overlooked the fourth figure in the church, perhaps the finest, certainly the most uncommon, of them all, at the east end of the south side. It is of alabaster and shows a churchman in choir habit with the almuce or fur tippet, sometimes worn for warmth as a hood, the ends of fur hanging down. It is a dignified piece of work, a hundred years or so later than the latest effigy of the knights. Whom it represents is unknown.

There was, it is interesting to learn, a guild in Birmingham, dedicated to the Holy Cross, which among other pieties, provided for services in St. Martin's church. Such unions of men and women formed for social enjoyment, local help,

regulation of trade and provision of prayers for the souls of the dead, filled many useful parts in their heyday, and the Birmingham guild seems to have been unusually fruitful in good works. The brethren maintained alm-houses and repaired two stone bridges, "and many foul and dangerous ways," while among their pensioners were an organist, a common midwife, and the bell-man, who was rewarded for informing the brotherhood when the spit ceased to turn—a smoke spit, which the draught kept in revolution, I suppose, in the great cooking before the common feast. The two guild priests, who said divine service daily in honour of God, His Holy Mother, the Holy Cross, St. Thomas the Martyr and St. Catherine, lived in chambers over the gateway of the church. We can fancy the disorganisation that would follow the suppression of such a beneficent society as this, and the confiscation of its possessions at the Reformation. In this case about two-thirds of the guild property were handed over to the governors of a new grammar school, called after King Edward VI, and the old Guild-hall in New Street continued to serve as a school-house for over 150 years.

Deritend, down the hill in ancient, poverty-stricken Birmingham, had a guild also, about which little is known, save that one of its chaplains was a schoolmaster. There was also a "proper chapel," and "fair mansion-house" in that street, where, according to Leland, who visited it in 1538, dwelled smiths and cutlers. The "proper chapel," built because in the season of the winter floods the people could not go to their parish church (Aston) "without great danger of perishing," has disappeared, but the "fair mansion house," principal relic of Leland's Birmingham, the "Old Crown" House,

a finely timbered inn, still remains, and in the plaster of the ceiling of the gallery chamber are found curious decorative symbols, the double triangle of masonic fame, the fleur-de-lys, and the six-pointed star.

CHAPTER XXVII

Aston Hall

A Prejudiced View

ASTON lies away, and away, and away somewhere; you take the tram at Steelhouse Lane, then at Aston Cross, and so on and on past mean streets, and streets, and streets.

When I think of Aston it is to recall a talk with a woman, who had quitted it to keep a little village shop. One gets so quickly to real talk with people who live with realities in little homes. She liked the country for the "scenery and that," she said, and would desire nothing better than her present surroundings, if trade had been more stirring. At her former shop "there wasn't time to breathe," and she loved to be busy all day long. "There's fors and againsts," she said, pondering the contrast, but on the whole the balance seemed to incline in favour of rural life. At least social conditions there were not so grim. "Cattle and fowl are housed better in the country than men and women in great towns. You can't wonder at the hold the drink gets in such places. I was just the once in a public house, and I've never forgotten how grandly lit up it was, and the room!".....She meant spaciousness. "They want to get away from the cribs they live in." So we pondered on the human lot and how lightly Fortune—Dante's Fortune, happy and careless with the other primal creatures—bestows her gifts, so that there is a certain rich man.....and a certain beggar.....who lies at his gate.....but the talk is

old, old and familiar as life itself. "It doesn't bear thinking of," she said, and her voice was grave, "I don't say as we should all have as much as one another, not to be all alike, but all should have a little."

And so with a sigh and a smile, after making trade as stirring as might be by the purchase of a few bull's eyes—a confection, alack-a-day! everywhere markedly inferior to the sort vendible in one's childhood's days—we shook hands friendly, and I went my way.

At last a refreshing piece of green appears about a towered Jacobean house of brick and stone, imposing of its kind, but gloomy and somewhat decayed-looking on a gray winter's day. This is Aston Hall. It would have been an ideal centre for a garden city, had a greater space of park been saved from the over-hasty builder, for those, who knew it a generation or two ago, speak of pleasant countrified surroundings and an avenue of chestnut trees. But it is idle to discuss might-have-beens. One should be thankful for the public spirit which has secured for the people the amenities of a splendid specimen of the Jacobean house and forty-three acres of park so near to the city throng.

I must confess to an unaccountable aversion from Aston Hall. To me it is a Dr. Fell. If it were only lived in! When a house ceases to be inhabited its *raison d'être* is gone, and the larger the house, too, the more desolate. A little place like Shakespeare's can better stand the strain. Perhaps on a bright Whit-Monday, when the panelled rooms are lit up with sunshine, and the holiday crowds determine to be happy, one would receive quite a different impression; I can imagine, too, quite a delightful gathering of gray-haired archaeologists

discoursing at large on the many merits of the place ; but when the elaborate fire-places are empty, the rooms unpeopled, or partly filled with an unhomelike medley of mummies or stuffed beasts, one does not care to linger there, one makes haste to be gone.

The Hall was built between 1618 and 1635 by Sir Thomas Holte, who played the host to Charles I on the nights of October 16 and 17, 1642, the week before Edge Hill. The house suffered in the Civil Wars ; it was garrisoned by the Cavaliers, but the Roundheads carried it by assault, and a newel on the staircase, splintered by a canon ball, still bears traces of the fight, while bodies of men killed in the struggle lie hard by in the churchyard. The estate passed from the Holte family in the eighteenth century, and eventually—the corporation giving the lion's share of the purchase money—the house and a portion of the park became the property of the citizens of Birmingham, being opened in state by Queen Victoria, in 1858. There must be some old people who still remember the Queen's visit. My mother, who saw her and Prince Albert, escorted by the county yeomanry on her way to Stoneleigh Abbey, always spoke of a plain little lady with a heated face bordered by a white chip bonnet. There were illuminations in the Park that evening and the Queen appeared on the balcony of Stoneleigh Abbey to the delight of a vast and cheering crowd.

Aston Hall is a wonderful specimen of a Jacobean house, full of individual beauties, such as the Elizabethan staircase, familiar through countless reproductions, the queer and rather delightful frieze of animals in the great hall, and, of course, the panelled gallery, which more than any other feature stirs

the imagination. Gloomy legends are attached to the upper storey of the Hall. One is of a daughter of the house who died mad. They say she was kept shut up in a garret for refusing to marry the man of her father's choice, and some evidence for the tale is furnished by the presence of a kitchen underneath this room, where food must have been prepared for an inmate living apart from the rest of the household.

The story of Sir Thomas Holte and his cook may not be connected with Aston, and may or may not be true, but it tends to accentuate my unfortunate prejudice against the clan. Sir Thomas, they say, enraged at his cook's want of punctuality, which had lost him a wager, rushed into the kitchen, seized a cleaver and split the luckless one's head into two parts. No, no, no, no, no! It is not good to stay in this strange and sombre place. One is glad to bid the Holtes farewell.

There is one room, though, I like to think of. It has an interest apart, since it contains copies of Samuel Johnson's works and relics of his friends and associates, particularly Dr. Edmund Hector, at whose house in Old Square Johnson seems to have been at all times a welcome guest. Hector was a friend in those early days of struggle, whereof—Boswell being as yet unborn—we know less than we could wish. It was at Birmingham that Johnson met the wife whom Garrick mimicked and whose memory Macaulay flayed. Yet there must have been some fine quality in Elizabeth Johnson that escaped the mockers and enabled her, living and dead, to keep such a hold on her husband's heart. At Birmingham they printed Johnson's first written achievement, a translation from the French of a book of travel in Abyssinia. Before the work was complete, however, a characteristic fit of inertia seized him

and he refused to leave his bed; whereupon the devoted Hector, sitting by his side, wrote from his friend's dictation and despatched the copy to the impatient printer. The book is now forgotten, but it left its mark on the translator's mind, since he chose far-away Abyssinia as the scene of his tale of "Rasselas."

Is it that any one now reads that once so famous work? Sir Walter Raleigh's recent book on Johnson seems to bespeak a reviving interest in those moral disquisitions so dear to the heart of the eighteenth century. But I question if we can ever recapture that spirit of idolatry with which our grandmothers and their contemporaries, Miss Pinkerton of Chiswick Mall and Miss Deborah Jenkyns of Cranford, regarded the writings of the Sage. There is often so much more in men than they can put into the books they write. Because of Boswell's genius we are enabled to see that *more* that went to make up the man, Samuel Johnson, his powerful presence, his bedrock sense and pithy talk, his odd ways, boundless loving-kindness and midnight prayers.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Aston Church.

"Ladies Dead and Lovely Knights."

ASTON church, with its fine spire, lies close to the Park gate. It is a surprising place, like a pictured page of history, for though the fabric is mostly modern, it contains a glorious assemblage of ancient tombs commemorating "ladies dead and lovely knights," unlooked-for in that neighbourhood of sombre newness. They lie in the chancel, cut in alabaster, figures of knights of the stock of Arden, Erdington and Harcourt,men whose neighbours one imagines companioned the Black Prince in his wars, or defied Joan the Maid, or saw Lancaster go down at Barnet or York at Bosworth. "Lovely" their effigies lie there, but in life, being human, this knightly class did unlovely deeds. Demoralized by Henry V's French wars, they fell under the dominion of factious nobles like the Nevilles or the Staffords, and from fighting the French abroad turned at these magnates' bidding to fight Englishmen in their native land.

The armour these knightly figures wear rejoices the expert's heart. On the earliest of them—he lies on the north side—appear the camail and the jupon of the age of Fulk de Birmingham and the Black Prince. In the case of the other of the bare-headed warriors of a century later, the tippet of mail and short surcoat are gone, the men are as if "locked up in steel," whereof the weight accounts for so much of the

mortality in the Wars of the Roses. They have the breast-plate visible, and elaborate defences for thighs and shoulders, and their collars—or traces thereof—show their adherence to Lancaster or York.

On a tomb made up of stone and alabaster on the north side has been placed an alabaster knight of the fourteenth century alongside a stone lady of a different period, so that two unconnected people have been joined together in their last memorial. The knight was an Arden, but the identity of the stone lady whose charming rounded face has been little hurt by the passing years, is unknown. She is more than a hundred years later in date than her Arden companion and wears a curious rounded head-dress of the reign of Henry VII. The knight, whose date is about 1360, is clad in mixed armour of mail and plate, and there remain pieces of *lapis lazuli* decoration in the border both of his bascinet (helmet) and of his baudric (girdle) still in their setting, a feature rare if not unique. In other cases the setting is there but the jewel is gone. The knight is probably Ralph Arden of the renowned and pious stock of the Curdworth Ardens descended from Turchil of Warwick of Domesday fame and (say some) on another side from Lady Godiva, and he lies with a boar, the Arden crest, now headless, at his feet. The Ardens sided with Montfort in the Barons' Wars and with York in the time of the Roses. Tragedy touched the house; Robert the Yorkist was executed in 1452 and in 1583 Edward, hated by Leicester, suffered death for supposed complicity in a Catholic plot to assassinate Elizabeth. But the glory of the line centres in the humbler branch of the Snitterfield Ardens, in Mary, the grand-daughter of one Thomas, who purchased land at Snitterfield

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in 1501 and was probably identical with Thomas, one of the younger grandsons of the Yorkist Robert. This Mary married John Shakespeare. Unfortunately, like so much that is connected with Mary Arden's famous son, probability has not yet given way to certainty in this matter of descent.

Still more attractive are the figures of a bare-headed knight in complete plate armour and a lady with head-dress and mantle beside him, their alabaster faces delicately cut. The effigies represent either Thomas Erdington and his wife—he married a Harcourt—or his son, another Thomas, founder of a chantry here, and his wife Joyce. If the tomb commemorates the pair of the older generation, it must have been raised many years after their death. The lady's figure is very charming. She has a wasp waist, a long mantle, a butterfly head-dress—they were made of gauze and came into fashion about 1470— and at her feet are two tiny dogs. She died in childbed, it seems, for underneath her mantle are fragments of the feet of two infants in swathing bands.* The rest of the baby figures, which stood upright one on each side the mother, is gone.

Historically the interest of these two figures centres in their collars. The lady wears the SS. collar of Lancaster. Her husband also wore one, probably with the same badge, but it has been—no doubt of deliberate intent—defaced. The younger Sir Thomas was at one time a Yorkist. Whether he changed again in the brief period of Lancaster's triumph (Oct. 1470—Mar. 1471) when the Kingmaker and the traitor Clarence brought back Henry VI, we do not know. Perhaps he was not then alive. But that there is a history attached

* In this matter of the Aston tombs, I am much indebted to Mr. P. B. Chatwin. See Preface.

to the defaced collar is certain, either of personal rancour or party strife.

The Erdingtons held the manor of that name, now a peopled Birmingham suburb, for many generations. It subsequently passed—how is not clear—to "false, fleeting perjured Clarence," and through several hands to the Devereux, also commemorated in this church, then again to the Holtes. The most noteworthy of the Erdingtons was a certain Thomas, chamberlain to King John who was "privately sent"—Dugdale says—"Embassador to Admiralius Murmelius, great King of Aphrica, (delightful spelling!) Marrochia and Spain, to let him know that he would willingly deliver up this Kingdom to hold of him by a certain Tribute, as also forsake the Christian Religion, and cleave to the Law of Mahomet, in case he might have Assistance from him, to such desperate Condition was he exposed by his Rebellious Nobility."

No one denies to John, bad as he was, daring and resource. I suppose the English, had Thomas de Erdington's mission succeeded, would have been compelled to go over with their king to Islam!

The figure further east, that of a solitary knight, much resembles that of Sir Thomas Erdington, save that, as a Yorkist, he wears the collar of suns and roses. Edward IV considered that the appearance of a mock-sun or parhelion before the battle of Mortimer's Cross was a sign of good omen, and therefore, maybe, adopted the sun as a badge. This knight is a Harcourt, possibly Sir William Harcourt of Maxstoke, steward to the Duke of Clarence, who, as we have seen, held Erdington after Thomas Erdington's dispossession or death. The Harcourts had an hereditary quarrel with the

Staffords of Maxstoke. The fifteenth century has gone down in our annals as the age *par excellence* of the family feud, magnified to terrible dimensions in the Wars of the Roses. The principals never forgot an injury or let an occasion pass for drawing the sword, and as for their retainers, it must have been one eternal "I do not bite my thumb at you, Sir, but I bite my thumb, Sir," in the Montagu-Capulet style, ever furnishing an excuse for brawling. A serious scuffle between the two families, attended with bloodshed, occurred at Coventry at Corpus Christi-tide, 1447. Sir Robert Harcourt and his men fell on Sir Humphrey Stafford and his son, Richard, after nightfall in the streets. Richard was slain and his father wounded in the fray, and two of the Harcourt faction also died, all this taking place in a minute "in a Paternoster while," as the writer of one of the "Paston Letters," chronicler of the brawl, declared. Sir Robert Harcourt escaped justice only to die twenty-two years later at the hands of the avenging Staffords.

There is a tomb of a Devereux in Jacobean trunk-hose—he married a daughter of the luckless Edward Arden—but either it is dark in that corner of the aisle or I was wearied and did not look at it. After all, it is the alabaster figures, the Erdingtons and Harcourts, that call forth all the strength and affection one has to give in such a place. Men and women are so much less interesting if peradventure they lived after Bosworth Field. After that date the glamour of the splendid days is gone.

In the north aisle is a Tudor tomb to the Holtes, which is odd and poor and need not be looked at; but I think I might have given some attention to the brass to Thomas Holte,

one of Henry VIII's Commissioners for the Dissolution of the Monasteries, because of the quaint inscription. It is, however, hidden under yards of matting or linoleum, and the verger, fearing no doubt some nefarious design on my part, concealed its existence.

Talking of vergers—one cannot escape the thought that this calling exercised in a church of note is one which a philosopher would find it hard to overpraise. Other men may make more stir in the world—your Napoleon conquers Europe, your millionaire organizes mass-production—but one may question if the parish clerk's is not the better life. He plays his part in christenings, weddings and burials, performed with soothing ceremony, and he marks how men and things pass, and how lights and shadows travel round the church all day long. Then too he can take his ease by the vestry fire. His talk, when he lets himself go, is usually sound as a nut in October, for while it is not uncommon for a man to finish his course at either of the major universities and remain a fool at the last, it is rare to find a parish clerk who is not—in the eighteenth century phrase—a man of parts. I have known him with a dash of the cynic in him. Towards the clergy, whose calling he sees from the inside, he maintains something of the attitude of the proverbial *valet-de-chambre*. In riper years maybe he becomes something too much of the *laudator temporis acti*. Like the pursued hare he keeps looking back. It is the last vicar or, by'r Lady, the last but one, who was the man sent from God. Let me name two Warwickshire clerks gone to rest, Spires of Stoneleigh for my childhood's sake, and Chapman of Holy Trinity, Coventry, an observer of carved stones and men. Lie lightly on their bodies, gentle earth.

CHAPTER XXIX

Stratford

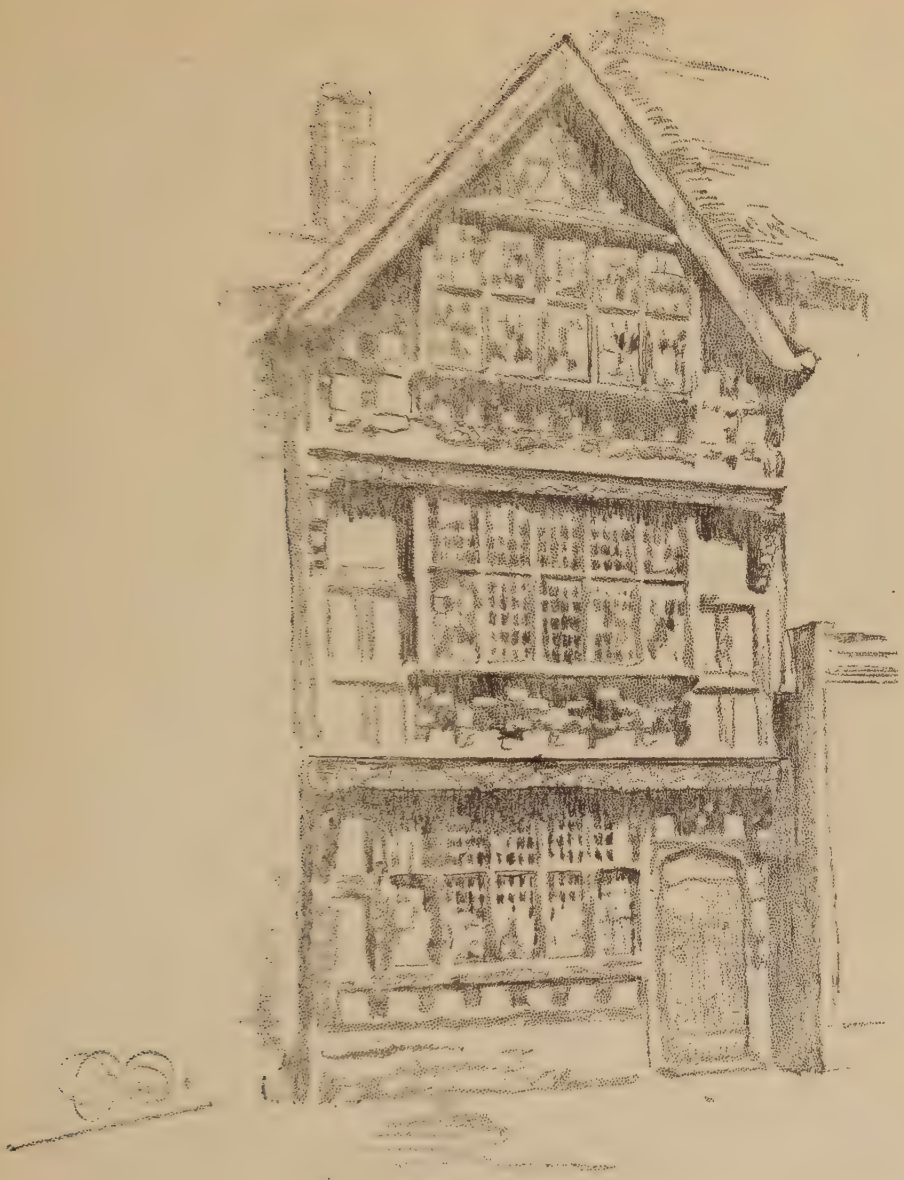
The House

THERE is a pull about Stratford, as there is about great storied cities with ancient names. If business take you near, rather than miss it, you approach it by devious ways. "It is not far round," you say, "there is that business of the quartos and the folk-lore tale to discuss, and the sun sets late." For Stratford is a place where one can be happy as a king, talking of folk-lore or quartos by the hour, under the delusion that such matters, and not birth and death, war and peace, poverty and plenty, are the serious affairs of life.

So many of the houses in the pleasant streets belonged to Shakespeare's family or friends. There is Nash's house by New Place, and next the house of Julius Shaw, one of the witnesses of the will, and a little further that of Thomas Hathaway, who must have been one of Anne's kin. Stratford is one of the few English places where beauty and old-worldness are accounted too important to be swept away for mere convenience or whim. Elizabethanism is an asset too valuable to be let go; so they pull off the covering stucco, and the old beams and posts of the houses stand revealed. Just now, they have restored the house at the corner of Bridge Street, where Judith Quiney lived after her marriage in 1616. Poor Judith with the unknown grave! Was she the unlucky one of Shakespeare's daughters? Susanna Hall had in addition

to the rights of primogeniture, a prudent, knowledgeable husband, while Thomas Quiney, the roving one, after losing his money in Stratford, went up to London, and came, I fear, to little good. Judith lived till 1662. If only some of the Restoration wits had had the wit to come up to Stratford and question her about her father and note down her replies.

We can but touch lightly, as we pass, on some of the features of Stratford. The theme is overwhelming. Writing, I tremble at my rashness, and crave pardon of those scholars who give a lifetime's work to the elucidation of some matter I have ignorantly touched on or passed unthinking by. But this book, as I have said, is " no furniture for the scholar's library," but must only serve as a pastime for those who have travelled, or desire to travel, over the ways of the county, which some of us are lucky enough to call our home. To describe Stratford would be a lifetime's work, and leave much unaccomplished at the end. Inevitably, we turn our steps towards the house in Henley Street. It is a grave little place, with a wooden porch and gables, and makes small show in a street that is part sadly new, part old. Hawthorne has described it best. He tells of the lower room with the " pavement of gray slabs of stone," all cracked and broken, " as if an earthquake had burst up the floor " ; of the great rough fireplace in the kitchen " with space for a large family under the blackened opening of the chimney and an immense passage-way for the smoke, through which Shakespeare may have seen the blue sky by day and the stars glimmering down at him by night." Then upstairs is the little birth-chamber, low-ceiled and dark, where thousands of obscure people have sought to gain immortality by covering ceilings, walls and window-panes with their



HARVARD HOUSE, STRATFORD

undistinguished names. "Methinks," said Hawthorne, "it is strange that people do not strive to forget their forlorn little identities in such situations, instead of thrusting them forward into the dazzle of a great renown, where, if noticed, they cannot but be deemed impertinent."

In the library, where rare editions are kept, an old friend of mine, who has now passed to where problems are either all solved or sink to nothingness, used to discourse eruditely on Shakespeariana of every kind. Will any future guardian of the place ever insist on the importance of contemporary testimony so convincingly as she, or confute the Baconians with such finality? These last, indeed, vexed her soul, and they are—if one may call by evil names one's fellow-creatures or 'even Christians'—a pestilent race. It is not that they waste their time, which is a matter of little import. They waste the time of others, more fully versed in literature than they, and better able to estimate probabilities, who have to go over and confute their frivolous charges. There seems signs that the fad is tending to exhaust itself, for one hears less about Baconians in these strenuous days.

In the Henley Street garden are grown all the plants Shakespeare names in his plays. The gross and artificial flower-pot hyacinths strike somewhat of a discordant note. Had the

Dutch brought these to such perfection in Shakespeare's day? Would it not be the common bluebell that was in the poet's mind? Rosemary grows there "for remembrance. I pray you, love, remember."

Does anyone know the Shakespeare house at Oldwiche End Mr. Brassington talks of in "Shakespeare's Homeland?" It lies in country so remote and quiet, save for a brook rising near Honiley, that

"makes sweet music o'er the enamelled stones,"

that I cannot forbear to speak of it, though in this book we have never visited the Temple Balsall countryside. (There is a path opposite the "Orange Tree" inn at Chadwick End on the Warwick-Birmingham road.) As to the pedigree of the house—or shall we say, as to the pedigree of the Shakespeares?—one is not altogether on sure ground. Adam de Oldiche, who died in 1414, was the ancestor of the Shakespeares of Baddesley Clinton, but the link which binds this Adam with John Shakespeare, who married Mary Arden, is still to seek.

The farm at Oldwiche End, traditionally inhabited by the Shakespeares, has old timbers, though the front is modernized. Old panelling is to be seen within, beams, too, mysterious cavities that would make the house an adorable place for hide and seek. Our Warwickshire barns are not equal to those in the Cotswolds, but here is a barn, brick but with good timbers—like all barns, *experto crede*, when packed with straw that tinkles and crackles as one slides down, a glorious play-place in the golden twilight.

About here one would like well to linger, for holly hedges grow by grassy ways; romantic Baddesley Clinton is near, and the name of the "Tom o' Bedlam" inn recalls the unfor-

gettable storm scenes in "King Lear," but Stratford, and the great business—whereto we are but unequal—call us back.

Church Street and Chapel Street have extraordinary charm, and the powers that be make museums of some of the houses, bringing to New Place non-Shakespearean but most marvellous exhibits, taken from pre-Christian interments, the spoils of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Bidford. Some of these treasures go back to the sixth century. Eighty skeletons have been found, and ashes in cinerary urns, traces of an older method than inhumation for disposing of the dead. Bidford was a place of prime military importance, guarding the approach over the Avon to the forest country. The skulls of these people do not seem very different from those of modern folk. Mankind changes hardly appreciably in fourteen hundred years. Some of the treasures the excavators unearthed are rare and wonderful, and will greatly enlarge our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon art. The men were found lying with their arms—spears, lances, daggers and shields—beside them, and the women with a food-pot or a mead-cup on their right-hand side, with their necklaces of amber and glass beads and often two brooches at the breast. The most pathetic *trouvaille* is that of a small cylindrical workbox or needlecase found placed by the left knee of a child of about eight years old. It is curious that the skeletons were chiefly those of young people; there were few examples of men and women over middle life, and only one of a really aged person.

One museum formerly in Stratford (the Fusileptic !) some very old people may yet remember. 'Twas hardly of the serious kind we affect to-day. A man kept it, who fashioned from the roots of trees likenesses to everything in

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this mortal world, from Noah's Ark, say, to Shakespeare's bust. The specimens, he used to say, were 'part art, part nater.' It is one of a lifetime's many regrets that I never heard these descriptions from his lips. The Master, I doubt not, would have taken delight in him.

Close to the church is Avon-bank, where a new house has replaced an old one with much history. In the early part of the nineteenth century the Misses Byerley kept a ladies' school there, and from about 1825—1827, one of their pupils was Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, better known as Mrs. Gaskell. One of the Byerley sisters was a woman of fine personality, and known as "Jane the Just." Their famous pupil remained two years at Stratford, including holidays, and received an education which, wonderful to relate for those days, included Latin and Italian, as well as French. Her first literary effort, a description of Clopton House, which she saw in her schooldays, was included in Howitt's "Visits to Remarkable Places." She seems to have borne Warwickshire in mind in her writings. She makes the character of Lois, the witch, in one of her tales, a native of Barford, while Mr. Kirkpatrick, first husband of the inimitable Mrs. Gibson in "Wives and Daughters," must have been a curate in this neighbourhood, as he walked five miles to Stratford to purchase a muffin, a delicacy his wife fancied at the time her daughter, Cynthia, was born.

A large, oval-shaped room, the music-room of the school, but, I fancy, originally a ballroom with a wonderful floor, serves as a reminder of former possessors. One owner of this corner of the world was Shakespeare's cousin, Thomas Green.

Close to New Place is the Chapel of the Holy Cross, whereof

the nave was built for the guild of that name by Sir Hugh Clopton, the great London merchant. The walls were formerly adorned with paintings of the history of the Holy Cross, the martyrdom of St. Thomas à Becket, St. George and the Dragon, and Doomsday. They were discovered in 1804 and are reproduced in Fisher's monograph. Those belonging to the story of Helena and the Invention of the Holy Cross appear specially quaint, while the devils in the *Inferno* scenes were executed with the realism so much to the mind of the Middle Ages. Probably the discoverers were shocked, and made haste to conceal or destroy. The art of the pictures was provincial and not of a high order, still, would that they had been left! I wonder if the whitewash covering could be removed with extreme care—as has been done at Wootton Wawen—to reveal, in the nave at least, the colours and forms that must have terrified and charmed our ancestors long ago.

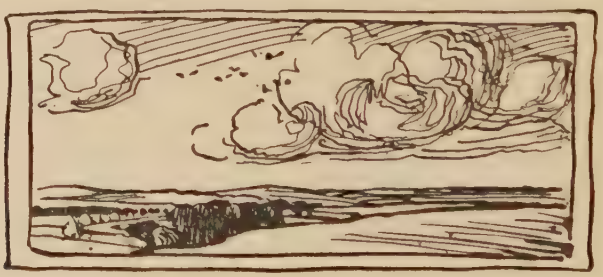
The theatre at the end of Sheep Street hardly composes well with the landscape, but as those, who have stood times without number in the long queue waiting for the opening of the gallery entrance know well, real good work is done there, and it is a happy place. The authorities are asking for money to endow the theatre, and among other things to build an "apron" stage, projecting into the auditorium, so that we may see Shakespeare played as his contemporaries did. We might thus, I hope, get rid of those intolerable "waits" necessitated by elaborate scene-shifting behind the curtain, so fatal to the atmosphere of a tragic play.

In the Picture Gallery is the Droeschout painting which experts, on grounds which we need not go into, have decided cannot be the original of the Droeschout engraving of the First

STRATFORD MOP

Folio. But it was not a fool who painted this picture, fake or no fake. It makes the dry bones of the engraving live. There is a glimmer of humour in the eyes. The colour of the picture is poor, but the photogravure in Sir Sydney Lee's "Life" is not without its attractions. It shows a face one has loved in a former life. Probably it has been noted again and again that in the bust—there is a cast near the Droeschout painting—the two sides of the face are not alike. Does that fit in with the theory that it was copied from a death-mask, death having followed on paralysis?

But I speak as a fool. The inadequacy of the authentic portraits of Shakespeare, the Droeschout engraving and the bust, are one of the crosses humanity has to bear, but it is conceivable that the cross might be heavier still. Thank Heaven there is nothing sentimental or inspired about them! The bust, indescribably coarsened though it be with painting and re-painting, is infinitely more suggestive than the engraving, and when photographed in profile, one sees the fineness of the nose and the remarkable development about the neck and jaw.



CHAPTER XXX

Stratford Church

The Church

IT is the church, tower and spire, and the river and trees, that make Stratford so beautiful, and we must be thankful that a public spirit beyond praise has kept fields and gardens nearby free from the encroachments of the builder. It is good to sit on the low stone churchyard wall, looking out on the river and its reflections, or turning back to see how the fine chancel rises above the crowd of undistinguished graves. Then, too, one of those happy bursts of inspiration, which sometimes visit mortals, must have occurred when parson or churchwardens planted the lime avenue, which, over-arched, embowers the pathway to the south porch, where we must enter in quiet.

Probably most people pass through the door of Stratford church with bent head, as in the presence of greatness, and proceed immediately to contemplate the gravestone and the bust. In such a presence, mere architecture or mediaevalisms, or the monuments of other men, become impertinences. But yet—the world has wagged in Stratford, as in other places, be ore and since Shakespeare's time. Those who come to the church often, or those who come in the January quiet, with an hour or two to spare, and Mr. Harvey Bloom or Ribton-

Turner in their hands, may like to think, not of the Colossus alone, but of the petty men who built and beautified the church, or wrought and suffered and rest there in peace.

The church—taken as a church, not as Shakespeare's mausoleum—has points to occupy some happy hours. It is a building of different periods. The north transept, the north aisle and nave, are of the thirteenth century. John de Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury, built the south aisle in the fourteenth century, and the fine perpendicular chancel, with its great windows, was the work of Dean Balshall, and is later in construction by more than a hundred years. The east window is, however, rather disappointing, and the whole view eastwards shows this portion to be lacking in the height and dignity of the scheme of the chancel at Warwick. On the whole, the building must have been little altered in more modern times. Even the memorials of the forlorn little identities, who have thrust themselves forward into the dazzle of a great renown, still remain. There is, alas, a clamorous crowd of modern stained-glass windows, but no doubt the twenty-first century, bishop's faculty or no bishop's faculty, will rid itself of much Victorian glass. The transepts are shut off after the manner of the Middle Ages, when chapels were kept apart. Not to be missed are a fine screen and the most complete set of fifteenth century misericords in the shire. Very attractive are the Clopton tombs, at the end of the north aisle. There is a goodly number of them ; a coloured Elizabethan one to William Clopton (why, oh why, does he suggest Sir Andrew Aguecheek ?), an ornate monument to the Earl and Countess of Totnes, and (probably) the cenotaph of Sir Hugh Clopton, who built the bridge with fourteen great

arches over the Avon stream. The alabaster tomb to William Clopton does that worthy esquire (I am sure) injustice. There is no reason to suppose that the monument bore him the least resemblance. It is an example of the school of Gothic alabasterers when in the last stages of decay. The figures are highly coloured, and the artist has shown the husband bare-headed, with the rather ungainly armour of Elizabeth's time, while the wife Anne, born Griffith, has a black veil with a golden fillet round her head. Most diverting is the little row of named figures of children in the panel overhead, a device with which the earliest Peyto tomb at Chesterton has made us familiar. One of the Clopton children, named Joyce, afterwards Countess of Totnes, lies also buried here, while Margaret (like Ophelia) is said to have drowned herself for love. If it were but possible to take this memorial in a serious spirit! The monument to the Earl and Countess of Totnes in the classic style is of far finer workmanship, though not equal to Nicholas Stone's memorial to Sir William Peyto. The figures, with coronetted heads and delicate hands, lie swathed in mantles. The work is by Marshall, the rival of Nicholas Stone. Quite in keeping are the bas-relief decorations of cannons and cannon-balls, since Totnes was Master of the Ordnance to King James I. The most delightful memorial in the chapel, however, is that to Mrs. Amy Smith, a little black figure in a long veil, kneeling before a *prie-dieu*. She died in 1626 at Nonsuch, aged sixty years "and a maid," having been forty years waiting-gentlewoman to Lady Totnes, near whom she had a great desire to be buried. It is rarely we find a memorial to elderly single women; they were of so little account. I know of no other in the county, save the Astley inscription

commemorating the lady who lived handsomely on a narrow fortune.

Probably the charnel-house was formerly a north-chancel aisle. It was taken down in 1800, but many years after, piles of bones were discovered on the site. A not very reliable tradition represents Shakespeare living in a house near this place. "I have been told," says Langbaine, in "Lives of the Poets," printed at the end of the seventeenth century, "that he writ the Scene of the Ghost in *Hamlet* at his House, which bordered on the Charnel-house and Churchyard." Even more appropriately might he have written there the scene with the grave-diggers in that play. Shakespeare had evidently a horror of any indignity done to a dead body. "Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with them?" asks Hamlet. At least, the curse over his tombstone has safeguarded his own remains. There is no other record of his living in this situation, though Mamilius begins his little "winter's tale" with the words, "There was a man dwelt by the churchyard." The poet's cousin, Thomas Green, the town-clerk, held the property, now known as Avonbank, close by the north side of the church, and it is just possible Shakespeare may have shared his home, before dwelling at New Place.

The fifteenth century misericords are of great interest, but their meaning is not always clear. These are some of the subjects; a man and a woman coming out of a whelk-shell, the woman holds a distaff; an eagle and child, the well-known story of the Stanley family, which tells of an eagle carrying away the heir; a mermaid and a merman; a figure riding on a stag; a camel; a Satanic goat's head in a basket; ducks

or swans, one having a horseshoe ; a very amusing representation of an angry wife beating her husband with a ladle, while she pulls his beard ; a headless figure riding a web-footed creature ; a goat-horned Satanic mask ; another Satanic face with bat's ears ; St. George and the dragon, with the princess kneeling apart ; bears and the ragged staff ; a virgin in a horned head-dress with an unicorn, into which the hunter plunges a knife. This last enshrines the mediaeval animal myth, which fabled that the only means of entrapping an unicorn was to cause a pure virgin to frequent its haunts. The creature, thus decoyed and tame in her presence, could be easily slaughtered for the sake of its precious horn—a story typifying for the preacher of the Middle Ages the incarnation of Christ.

There is an interesting inscription on a tomb in the south transept, which is a fine tribute to a local worthy of the Shakespearean age :—

> " Heare lieth intombed the corps of Richard Hill,
> A woollen draper beeing in his time ;
> Whose virtues live, whose fame dooth florish stil,
> Though hee desolved be to dust and slime.
> A mirror he, and paterne mai be made,
> For such as shall suckcead him in that trade ;
> He did not use to sweare, to glose, eather faigne,
> His brother to defraude in barganinge ;
> Hee woold not strive to get excessive gaine
> In ani cloath or other kinde of thinge :
> His servant, S.I. this trueth can testifie,
> A witness that beheld it with mi eie." †

† Ribton Turner, " Shakespeare's Land," 96-7.

On a tomb in the chancel is one more inscription in Latin and English, which must be read. The English lines begin with translation of the commonplace, "Siste, viator" :—

> Stay, passenger, why goest thou by so fast ?
> Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plast
> Within this monument ; Shakspeare, with whome
> Quick Nature dide ; whose name doth decke ys tombe
> Far more than cost ; sith all yt he hath writt
> Leaves living art but page to serve his witt.

In the Latin lines the dead man is likened to the highest names in antiquity. His wisdom, it says, was even as Nestor's, the ancient of the siege of Troy, his wit and genius like that of Socrates, his art the equal of Virgil's. The people mourn his loss. In the English lines Nature, by a quaint conceit, is said to have 'died' with him, even as—according to another famous epitaph—she is said to have feared to die with the painter Raphael. Shakespeare was the greatest poet of his time, the words imply, since the work of other—then living—authors was but fit to serve as 'page,' or underling follower, to the outcome of his thought.* Clearly this man was by his contemporaries' accounts among the first of his age.

After this, we will look at no other tombs.

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* See S. Lee "Life" (1915) 499.

WARWICKSHIRE ELMS

CHAPTER XXXI

Shottery

AFTER seeing the church, I walked through the fields and allotment gardens to Shottery, just as the sun was setting in a red-gold haze. This hamlet is an anyhow place, with rutty ways, high walls and some modern buildings. On the left of the pathway, however, stands an ancient manor-house of stone and timber with a dovecote, once held by the Harewells of Wootton Wawen, who had license for a priest to celebrate divine service in an oratory in their dwelling. Here and there, too, by the wayside, are a few ancient black and white cottages with curving timbers, fancifully named to attract the traveller.

Anne's cottage is at the far end of the hamlet by the little stream, the "rith," called after a certain Scot, who gave his name to Shottery long ago. The name *aet Scotta rith* occurs as early as 704, for these low-lying places by the Avon meadows seem to have been colonized very early. Shottery was given to the bishopric of Worcester by Offa, King of Mercia, in the eighth century, and had it not been for the modern building, it might have furnished historians with evidence about the processes of settlement in early times. But we are straying from Anne's cottage, which, though become over-familiar from countless reproductions, is in actuality a very lovely place. Of many colours, being of thatched stone and timbers, repaired here and there with brick, it is on the whole a well-preserved specimen of the farm-house of the Elizabethan age, and they have planted, very happily, bushes of lavender in the garden.

The evidence is not absolutely clear, but it seems reasonable to suppose that Anne was the daughter or sister of one Richard Hathaway, and that the Hathaways, or their descendants, lived here practically to our own day. There was a Richard Hathaway, a dramatist in London who worked for Henslow, the great contractor for plays. If he were a relative of Shakespeare's wife, he might have been a means of helping the dramatist in London, though he himself never attained to great things as a playwright.

We all know the story of poor Anne, of the obscure hurried marriage, the bond naming Anne Hathwey of Stratford, and the license of the previous day with its element of confusion introducing the name of Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton. It is not certain whether bond and license refer to the same couple or not. Is it possible that the license was taken out by someone, who knew of Anne's temporary residence at Temple Grafton, and the scribe, in making the transcription in the Bishop's register, fell into the not very extraordinary error, the peculiarities of Elizabethan writing being considered, of substituting Whateley for Hathwey? * The next day, probably in accordance with directions given when the license was applied for, Shakespeare's and Anne's friends arrived to execute the bond to indemnify the bishop for granting the license should any irregularities occur. They may have described her as being permanently domiciled at Stratford. Does this seem an unreasonable explanation of the affair? Again I speak as a fool.

Evening was coming on, so I had tea in a cottage kitchen with a cracked floor and an ancient piece of timber, curving

* Gray, "Shakespeare's Marriage."

earthwards like a bit of a pair of gable-forks, such as Mr. Addy talks of in his learned and delightful book on the "Evolution of the House." There was a comfortable arm-chair and a glorious open fire, and being left to myself beside it, in that pleasant dreaminess which comes with fatigue after a walk in the open air, I fell a-thinking of the impressions of the day, of Shakespeare, the miracle with the elusive personality, and of Anne, whose fortunes Fate linked with his. The poet, as they remembered him in eighteenth-century Stratford, when the planting of the mulberry tree was still a matter of common talk, was a wit and a shrewd man in the business world. Graves of Mickleton speaks thus of him in the "Spiritual Quixote." "O, I know Stratford-on-Avon very well," says one of the characters in that book; "it's the place where Shakespeare, the great jester, was born." "All the idea which the country people have of the great genius," says Graves, "is that he excelled in smart repartees, and 'selling of bargains,' as they call it." This last is the side of his personality that legal documents reveal.

For the rest what do we know? He worked, he loved greatly, his comrades loved him.

> "Being your slave, what should I do but tend
> Upon the hours and times of your desire?
> I have no precious time at all to spend,
> Nor services to do, till you require,
> Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour,
> Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
> Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
> When you have bid your servant once adieu;
> Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
> Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
> But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought,
> Save, where you are, how happy you make those."

This sonnet must be from the pen of one who knew the very ecstasy of devotion. "I loved the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any," said Jonson. There must have been men, who overstepped the line and made an idol of him.

As to the marriage—if we dwell on the passages in the plays which appear to be self-revealing, particularly Prospero's caution to Ferdinand in "The Tempest," the case for an unhappy union looks undoubtedly strong. Yet there is so often more truth in men's actions than their speech. Shakespeare came back to Stratford to live for many years in the company of his wife and children, so that the place that gave him "birth," gave him "sepulture" at the last.

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